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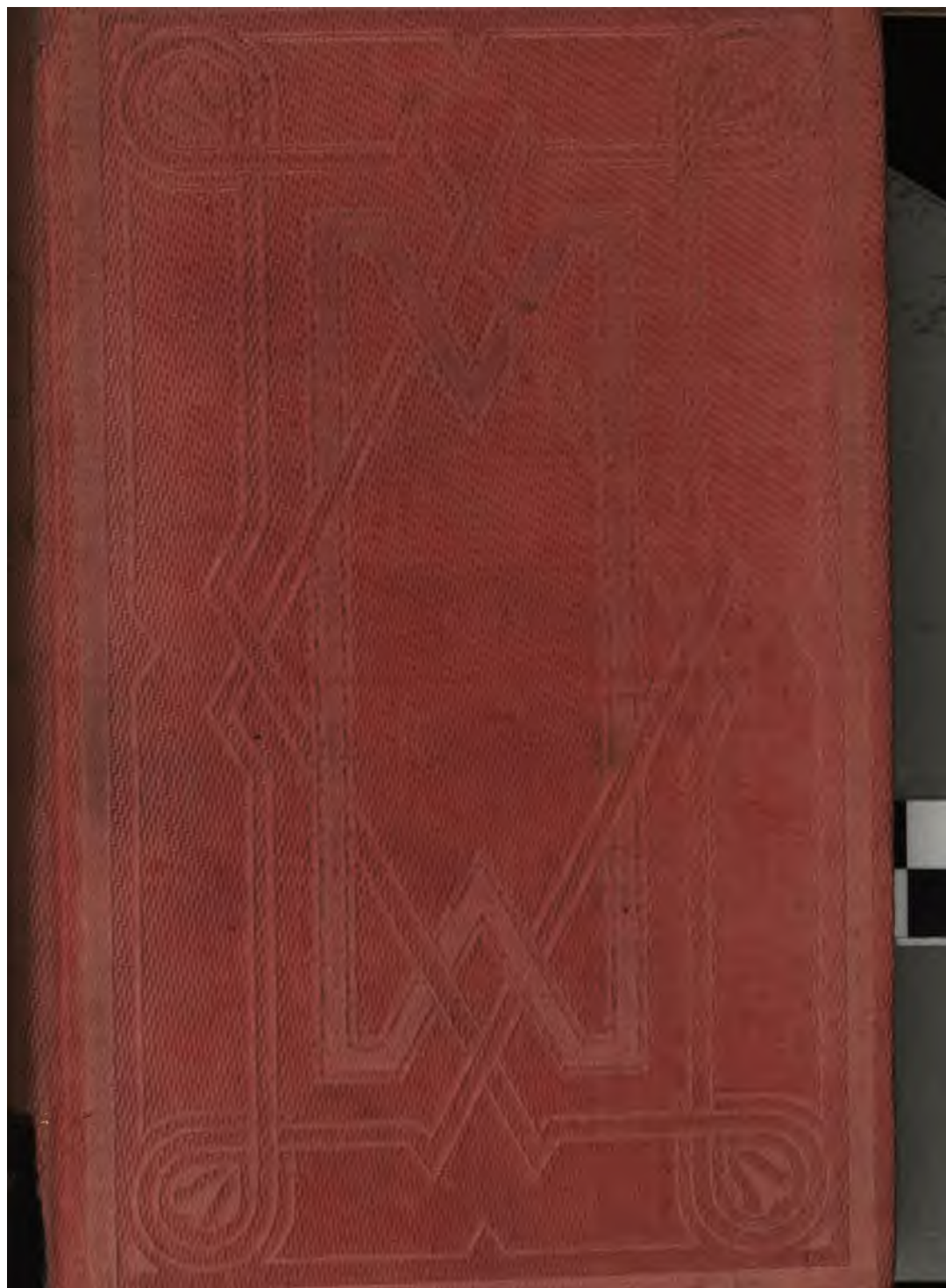
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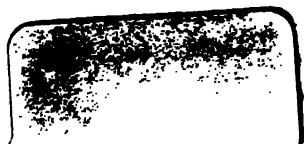
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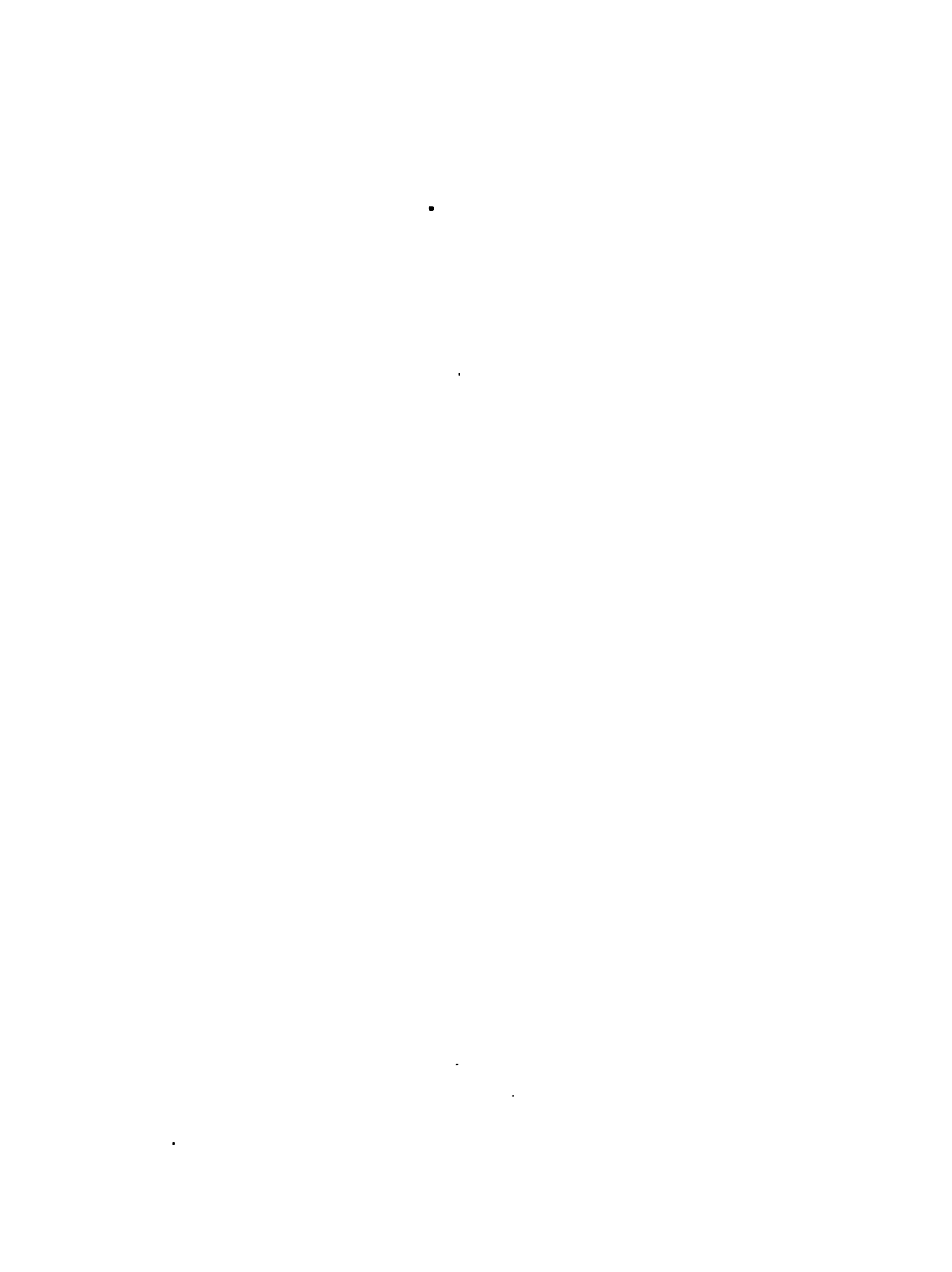




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BLIGHT;
OR,
THE NOVEL HATER.





'BLIGHT' LEAVES THE WIDOW 'HOPELESS',
TO COUNT HER GOLD.

177. . . .



BLIGHT;
OR,
THE NOVEL HATER.

A Tale of our Own Times.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"GOOD IN EVERYTHING," ETC., ETC.

To trim Heaven's lamp of Genius is no "creature task;"
'Tis an inspired and a spell-wrought act
To humanize the Ideal. Raise thou the mask
Of fairy FICTION, and reveal the FACT.

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BLIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

“Again I see the vision of the Past!—
Confusion!—did I take ‘Perg’ or ‘Dovor’ last?
Give me the opiate—for I’d rather be
Clear from the chaos, with a conscience free!”

“PACK them all up! every one of them, —not one particle of his rubbish shall remain here! Now, are all his moon-struck fooleries together? Can’t you speak, woman?” The above sentences, delivered in less time than they can be written, were addressed by Dr. Thornton, with great petulance, to his old servant Joan. He was standing in the centre of Ralph’s old study, with all the display of that young gentleman’s cherished talent around him: portraits, landscapes, animals, unfinished designs, in confused diversity.

"They are all here now, sir, I think," replied the trembling Joan, whose nerves were terribly shaken by her master's excessive irritability, and her feeling of condolence for poor Master Ralph.

"Surely you might have collected these things for Martin the upholsterer to take with him, this week or next, without my having to see that all is right! There! place them altogether—he'll pack them."

"I thought you wished me to pack them, sir."

"A pretty mess you'd make of it! As well ask an old donkey to pack as an old woman."

"My love, are you ready for lunch?" asked Mrs. Thornton's gentle voice from the doorway.

"Oh, yes! yes! You women think of nothing but stuffing, for everlasting! Here!" cried he, as his timid better-half retired, "do you know if there's any more of that beggarly boy's trash about?"

Re-entering the room, and not seeing the repeated signs from Joan, who had

moved behind the Doctor, and whose face was in a perfect agony, Mrs. Thornton said, "Yes, my-dear, to be sure; there's that little moonlight scene in your dressing-room."

Joan's heart beat lighter, only to redouble again, however, as good Aunt Rachel, after taking a lengthened survey of the paintings, said, doubtingly, "There's one other I've seen somewhere, surely. Isn't there one in Miss Ending's room, Joan?"

For the first time, Mrs. Thornton raised her eyes to the old servant's face, and was struck with her pallid cheek and agitated manner.

"Oh, don't ask her, she's growing old and foolish! You'd better go and fetch it yourself," said the Doctor, contemptuously. Here, stay a minute; I've a letter and some prescriptions I must write,—let my lunch be placed on my table in the back room, and keep those confounded doors shut, or I sha'n't be able to write a word, for your blessed tongues."

During this speech, Joan had run up

stairs, and as the Doctor left the study to go into the back dining-room, where he usually delivered his advice and recipes, Joan followed him closely, calling the while to Mrs. Thornton, who had begun carving a ham, that she "had brought the picture down." The folding doors were shut, and the Doctor, not observing Joan's entrance, sat down to his writing-table. She held the small portrait under her apron, and seeing that he had not perceived her, Joan appeared to change the plan regarding it; for, hastily crossing the hall, she placed it in a closet in the study, and then returning, opened one of the folding doors, and brought her master his lunch. There was nothing new in this proceeding, as from old habit she constantly waited upon him; and he, in his heart, preferred her doing so, in lieu of the man-servant. When he was indisposed, which was seldom, he would not have another servant near him, although he would scarcely have allowed that the old faithful creature was of any importance to his comfort. Joan knew very well how he

really valued her, and with a charitable spirit, as the reader knows, she put up with all the harsh names and the abuse which were sometimes levelled at her, but which, nevertheless, were frequently accompanied by the mirth of her crotchety employer. She had dwelt with him so many years that she fully understood how irritability and impatience had grown upon him, that to one less accustomed than she to his vagaries, he must have appeared at times anything but an estimable character; and even in her simple judgment he was sometimes the reverse of what a gentleman should be. But as our readers are also aware, Joan had a stronger tie holding fast her heart to Sea View, in the shape of the fair girl she was now assisting into the brougham, to take a drive with kind Aunt Rachel that fine afternoon.

Half an hour may have passed, perhaps, after the departure of the two ladies, when Joan knocked at the back dining-parlour door. She entered with the picture again placed under her apron.

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“Can I speak to you, sir?”

The Doctor looked up hurriedly from the letter he was writing, saying, “Yes, be quick; what is it?” and then he added, “What’s the matter?” seeing how the colour had forsaken old Joan’s cheek.

“I have got the picture out of Miss Ending’s room, sir; but I don’t know how she’ll like it taken away—she’s very fond of looking at it, and she don’t seem to like any one else to do so; mistress saw it once, and, ever since, Miss Eve has kept it in her cupboard.”

“Dear me! let’s look at this wondrous picture,” exclaimed the Doctor, ironically.

Old Joan’s face grew whiter as she said, “I think it may surprise you rather, sir, it is so like Miss Eve herself.”

She withdrew it from beneath her apron and held it before the wondering eyes of her master. She might well have said the sight of that face would surprise him, but she had not expected the livid countenance nor the deep groan which fell from his lips.

For a few moments the Doctor continued

to gaze upon, and she to hold, the portrait in silence between her trembling hands. He then rose and, taking it from her, placed it on the mantel-shelf, face to the wall.

Sit down Joan," he said in a hoarse voice. "And now," he continued, clearing his throat, "you must tell me all you know about this—for there must be some deadly mistake or some d——d trickery."

"I know very little, sir—next to nothing," was Joan's reply, bearing in mind Rose Lindsay's last words of caution, and remembering how she had said, that without it, the happiness of many might be involved, and, perhaps, peace of mind for ever broken.

"But d—n it, say what you do know," cried the Doctor, in his usual impatient tone.

"All I can say, sir, then is, that Mr. Ralph took that likeness of some one living in or near Doverton (to the best of my belief), and gave it to Miss Ending."

"Are you sure that's Mr. Ralph's doing? Some one living in Doverton! impossible! Are you sure he did not borrow it of anybody for a copy? God! what can it be?"

It was evident to the old servant that the Doctor had been making a great effort to conceal from her all his astonishment and horror at the sight of the portrait.

"I feared that it would shock you, sir," she said, the display of his feelings rather taking her off her guard.

"Shock me! why on earth should it shock me? It certainly isn't pleasant to have the portrait of a niece whose existence I had almost forgotten, brought before me in this way, and to be told that she is actually in Doverton. My God! it cannot be!"

He had forgotten his concealment again, and, rising from his chair, he paced the room like one distracted. Seeing in Joan's eyes a look of doubt and incredulity, he said,—

"Don't you remember long years ago—I told you how she had—how I looked upon her—in fact that—that I took her child in pity—because—because her husband was such a disgrace."

As he stammered all this at intervals, his face growing very red, he fixed his eyes sternly and almost threateningly upon her to whom he spoke as though he would force

her to acknowledge the remembrance of what she had never known. The old woman answered his fixed look with one of equal steadfastness, but full of truthfulness and honest meaning.

"Dr. Thornton," she replied, with a courage she was herself surprised at, "I cannot say that I remember what you have just told me. I remember to have heard that, in consequence of Miss Ending losing her papa, she came to live with you; I remember hearing you say she was your niece's child; but I remember nothing about 'disgrace' concerning Miss Eve's mamma."

A look of anguish passed over the Doctor's countenance as Joan uttered these last words; he turned to hide it, but she had marked it, and said emphatically, "Whatever else I may have heard from other sources regarding my dear young lady's birth and parentage, I shall keep secret, as I have ever done—perhaps rumour is not to be believed."

"What have you heard then?" demanded the Doctor, quickly.

"Only trifling events, which can never

solve a mystery. But, sir, you may rely upon the faithfulness of Joan."

The reader may consider there was a little hypocrisy about this speech of Joan's, knowing that the old woman had confided all she knew to Miss Lindsay; but the truth was, Joan, with a woman's "true tact," was endeavouring to sift the Doctor, in order that she might in some way be the means of relieving the hard lot of the poor "lady of the beach," who was now proved to be, too truly, the mother of her darling Eve.

"Pooh, pooh! woman, I never doubted your faithfulness—you attach too much importance to this affair," said the Doctor, after a pause in which he had considered what course he should pursue. His cheek was flushed deeply, and there was an unusual lustre in his eye; but he spoke with apparent composure as he continued, "Mr. Blight has always had the management of this unhappy affair for me, and it is through his negligence (which is inexcusable) that it has arrived at this crisis. My—my—niece—has always been a source of trouble, and—

and he should have striven to attend better to—to—this concern; I—I shall telegraph off for him immediately, and you—you—I will rely upon, not to mention one word of what has happened. Good God! in my position too!”

He rose again from the chair into which he had sunk at the commencement of this harangue, and then noticing the eyes of Joan still raised to his face with an expression of much doubt and anxiety, he added,—

“There’s scarcely a family you know which has not some degrading connexion—this is ours; and as I have brought that child up in innocence, so at any price shall she be kept of all concerning this abominable circumstance. You will swear by your Bible”—and here he looked searchingly into Joan’s eyes—“that no word, however light, of yours shall enlighten her.”

“I will swear that, sir,” answered Joan, firmly.

“And the same by your mistress—not a sentence, not the most trivial remark, alluding to that picture.”

The blood mounted still higher in the Doctor's face as Joan again replied, "I will swear. But you said you did not doubt my faithfulness."

"Neither do I." And, to Joan's great astonishment, the Doctor held out his hand and grasped hers fervently.

And so, accordingly, James the manservant was sent off with the telegraph message for Mr. Blight "to come to Sea View immediately, without an instant's delay." But Mr. Blight, being from home when it was delivered, did not reach Doverton till Mrs. Thornton and Eve, with all the servants (save Joan) had been for some hours locked in slumber. The latter had, according to the Doctor's desire, sat up, to let Mr. Blight in ; and the Doctor himself had waited in the back dining-room, in a state of mind almost impossible to describe — it seemed to be bordering on madness. Twelve o'clock had struck, and he had been trying to write and trying to read till he dashed both pen and book from him in despair. Turning to the portrait on the mantel-shelf, he sat down

facing it, and gazed at it for many minutes in silence, his heart heaving, and his strong frame trembling with suppressed emotion. By the convulsive working of his features, retrospection was busily at work. Ah! *she was at work*, and with a power which probed his heart's core! Where was the man then, who criticized human feeling, condemning *love* as a fictitious thing—who looked upon human passions as trifles to be overcome, and the fond heart's yearnings as things to be trodden down and despised? One would hardly credit that such a one existed in the excited form before him.

For the reader's illumination we will pierce the silence of his thoughts on "events long passed." We will open the fountain of his memory, that the pent-up waters may freely flow.

He thought of the first time he had seen that face before him. He thought of its loving aspect, and truthful, intellectual gaze, and he compared it with the dull, joyless eye, and the look of dreary vacancy it now wore. A judge of painting and a lover of

the art would have owned that little portrait a gem. True to the life it must have been for him to recall her to his mind's eye as he did now. When he first beheld her, joy had not lit up her countenance ; a certain air of despondency had then shaded it, which perhaps rendered his present task the easier. Many years ago, he had been called suddenly one night to an hotel in the West End of London, to attend a young man who had been thrown from his horse, and thereby got his leg broken. The family were travelling. It consisted of a lady and gentleman, their son and daughter, and a young lady who resided with them as companion to the latter. After setting the young man's leg, who was much deformed, and, as the Doctor found afterwards, as much so in mind as in body, he was introduced by the father to the lady and her daughter, and the young lady we have named entering the room where they were sitting just as he was about taking his leave, he was also introduced to her. We have omitted to mention another member or dependant of this family, in the

shape of a Catholic priest—a tall, thin man of forbidding air and reserved manner—who followed the young lady into the sitting-room of the hotel, and who scowled at the Doctor from under his shaggy brows as he slightly returned his bow. The Doctor noticed the downcast, troubled looks of certainly the most beautiful girl it had ever been his lot to see. He had to make constant visits to his patient during the three months the family remained in London; but, although he sometimes gained a hurried sight of the pensive beauty, as in passing her on the stairs, or suddenly entering the room where she might perchance be sitting with the lady or her daughter (and at such times she invariably rose and quitted the apartment), and although he could not help feeling much interest concerning her, and some curiosity, he never could obtain an opportunity of addressing her till within a few days before their departure from the hotel. He had gone that morning, as was his custom, from the invalid's chamber to the sitting-room, to

report the progress of a patient for whom he felt innate dislike, and no wonder, for the youth's character was one of those which inspire but little other feeling in the breasts of others. He was weak, licentious, and selfish to a degree, and the Doctor (who was as hasty in his opinions as at the present day) deemed it but of little consequence to mankind in general whether this aspirant to its vices survived or not. He would have informed the parents of his opinion regarding the constitution of their son, who, unhealthy from his birth, had increased his ailments by riot and debauchery; but they both seemed so wrapt up in this vile prodigal of theirs, that he thought it more prudent to leave the information for some one else to make at a future day.

On the morning in question he found the beautiful young lady alone. She was sitting at her embroidery-frame when he opened the door, and rose to meet him with a natural grace and an easy freedom of manner very different to the subdued one she had always shown in the presence of those with

whom she dwelt. He observed that she had been weeping. Indeed now, as he looked into those eyes before him, he could almost imagine that he could trace the tears again. (Alas ! how many have they shed since then.)

Now Thornton was not a young man then—he being the wrong side of forty—but nevertheless his heart did beat a little quickly at the sight of such beauty in distress, and he naturally asked the cause of her continual sorrow. She burst into tears of grief, that she tried in vain to force back to her aching heart, and told him all her sorrow ; and truly the burden on her young life was a heavy one to bear. She was an orphan, the orphan of Protestant parents. She spoke earnestly of a mother, whom she remembered well and loved dearly. Since her death she had been under the protection of the lady with whom she now dwelt, who had been an old friend of her mother's and brought up in the same convent. This lady had sworn to cherish her as her own, and indeed (and here the fair speaker was over-

whelmed with confusion), she was using every means to make her so in reality, by endeavouring to unite her, against her inclination, to her son, who had entertained so violent a passion for her that the poor girl's life had become one of ceaseless torment; for the father, also willing to contribute to the wishes of the young reprobate, without a thought as to the poor girl's present feelings or future position, of which she lived in daily dread, had, during the last year, caused the Catholic priest, before named, to take up his abode with them, that no step might be lost towards inducing her to embrace the faith of which they were all bigoted members. She seemed to forget in the relation of her sufferings that she was addressing a stranger, and poured forth her woes with such appealing eloquence that her hearer was convinced that her trials had been of no common nature, and, though sentiment never formed a part of the Doctor's nature, he was affected in a manner perhaps he had never been in his life before; and so indignant had he grown while listening to her

wrongs, that he extracted a promise from her, that should her martyrdom continue, and they actually presume to force her either to wed or to change her religion against her own free will, that she would come to him for protection. The Doctor little reckoned the task he was imposing upon himself. He went away burning with anger and indignation against his disreputable patient and his worthless family; but he was hardly prepared for what took place about six months after, when the fair "persecuted one" really made her appearance in his surgery and besought that protection he had so ardently desired to give her.

It was a dilemma, but his own hasty spirit had caused it; and when he saw the poor girl's genuine misery, at the remembrance of her sufferings his former feelings of pity and indignation were aroused afresh. It was a dangerous step for a young ardent girl to take, but she looked upon the Doctor in the light only of a protector, and he endeavoured to reconcile himself that there was nothing out of the way in a man of

his years adopting one young enough to be his daughter. But a feeling he could not account for, prevented him taking her to his home. What would his patients all think, if they heard that a beautiful girl was staying with him, and he a bachelor ! And then, the servants, too ! No, it would never do. She begged him to find her some situation, either as companion or governess, that she might soon be able to do without his timely aid. This he promised to do, and in the mean time placed her in a pretty cottage, near Shooter's Hill, where resided a woman whom he had employed as a nurse among his patients.

At first, he went down to the Hill at different periods, merely to enquire if she was perfectly comfortable, &c., bringing her word, from time to time, of any situation he had heard of ; but she more than once discovered that when letters had passed between them, relative to such business, there was some objection raised on his part as to their expediency. And now came the happiest portion of this poor girl's career,

and brief as it was, it was supremely happy. The long intervals were discarded, and each Sunday found the Doctor an inmate of the cottage. Not only her beauty, but her intellect had won upon him, so that he found in her a refreshment from the monotony of his daily life. And he came to the conclusion that the best way to protect her permanently, would be to make her his wife.

She was surprised, and at first discomforted to find that a man so much her senior should propose to her, but what could she do? Gratitude alone prompted her acceptance of the offer; and soon, very soon, gratitude ripened into love, such as her ardent nature could alone realize. She did then adore her benefactor, and had she become his wife, a faithful and devoted one would she have made; and doubtless the enthusiasm of her nature for the great and the beautiful would have kindled some ray of fire in the dormant tendency of his. He had made up his mind to marry privately, and then travel for a while, getting his partner to attend his own

immediate patients in the interim. And things had taken that course which rendered instant marriage desirable.

Those blissful summer evenings on that beautiful hill, and in the surrounding woods, had lent a charm, such as the heart of that enchanted girl vibrated to, with all its native warmth,—unguided, and left to pour at will that warmth into the bosom of the man she idolized, could lead but to one result, and therefore did Thornton take immediate steps for the solemnization of their union; for, to do him justice, honour was *loud* within him, and he had become as attached to the friendless orphan as it was possible for one of his temperament to be.

Unhappily, just at this juncture, an uncle, and his only one, possessing great wealth, fell ill. He was sent for suddenly, expecting his instant decease. This uncle resided in the south of France, and as the reader may remember in the earlier part of this history, it was told how he lingered in his illness, and how in consequence the return of Thornton was delayed. The sequel is soon

told. The fair tenant of the cottage was left, in common with all the Doctor's affairs, under the care and vigilance of his solicitor, Mr. Blight, and vigilant indeed he was, to note his constant presence in the neighbourhood of Shooter's Hill. No art was left untried, no mean trickery undone, to lead its sweet flower astray; and verily she was a flower to the eye and to the heart also; she was a fair blossom, as many a poor woman of that district could testify, for "she went about doing good," until her eye grew sunken, and her heart heavy.

One letter she received—one dear letter—from the man for whom she would have spilt her heart's blood. It would have been better for her had she lost all she had then and died, than have lived to have felt its healthy course turn into one of never-ending bitterness, with the drops falling in ceaseless anguish into the tide of despair! Yes, heart-wringing despair! until the knowledge of its woes had ended for ever in the gulf of idiotcy!

Blight worked his way in vain on the

flower he strove to ruin, until he changed the direction of his deadly plans. The letter she wrote, in answer to his who was to her a husband, he never received. He wrote again, and this time his missive was intercepted. But why follow the course of the insect whose creeping, poisonous breath wrought in due time its full effect of sin, misery, and madness ! The diabolical passion he had conceived for this fair flower, we need hardly say, was met with rebuff and disdain ; but he fastened his fangs upon her to serve his purpose in another way. The woman of the cottage had a daughter, then a bright, blooming girl—the present wretched widow—Hopeful, or, as we last called her, *Hopeless* ! He wound his way round the heart of the simple thing, and promised her marriage, after the manner of his patron, but with no intention of performing the same. But the horrible part of the tale has yet to be told. The Doctor received a letter which, firm, strong man as he was, sent the blood back to his heart with a force that well-nigh deprived him of life, and he was laid up for

many days. It was from the woman of the cottage. Blight managed cautiously and well. It too plainly proved the inconstancy of her whom he had plighted as his own. Then he wrote to Blight, and the reply of the latter was in a few sentences, of apparently deep sympathy, and ending with the words, "*that alas! there were few officers on Woolwich Common who did not know the 'Beauty of the Hill.'*"

And so time wore on, and the poor Beauty was removed (as the reader will now understand) down far into the country, to the humble dwelling of the good Mrs. Bertram, where, in due time, she gave birth to a poor little, delicate babe, herself becoming, from the torture of mind she had undergone, a raging maniac, until, her babe taken from her, in the reaction of her frenzy, she had sunk into the apathy of despair! And this was the sad history of the Lady of the Beach, the mother of Eve Ending. No wonder that tears, long since strangers to the Doctor's eyes, should find their way there then, as he contemplated the wreck before

him ! But he rose now, and once more turning the dreary spectacle from his vision, he said aloud, " Yes, I have done all that I could do. Were the case published no one could cast on me a shadow of blame ; but this must be avoided—ah, at any price, it must, and it shall be ! How ever came she here without his knowledge ? "

He had hardly pronounced the above before Mr. Blight was admitted by Joan, whose conflict with her feelings, amongst which apprehension was predominant, shone in her countenance, and caused the man of law to enquire if anything was seriously the matter. Joan, merely replying that she believed so, ushered him through the folding doors into her master's presence, taking care, while appearing to close them after him, to leave them unclasped, which movement was unremarked either by the Doctor or his visitor, who were both too much engrossed by the subject of their meeting to heed aught else. By this means the crafty old woman could see as well as hear, and, although it was only from time to time that she could

catch a glimpse of her master's face, she had a full view of that of his counsellor, which was what she most desired to contemplate. The Doctor commenced the matter of the interview by pointing to the portrait which he had again turned to the light, and asking, in a voice husky with rage, what it meant.

To Joan's astonishment, the lawyer expressed no surprise, either by word or countenance; he merely sighed, saying in sorrowful accents, "Ah! I was afraid it would come to this!"

"What, in the name of all that's cursed, do you mean?" demanded his interrogator; adding a fearful oath, with a request that the solicitor would speak in plain language.

"I mean what I say," coolly replied the other. "And you must remember how I have warned you of such an occurrence more than once, if you did not follow the advice I gave; I have done my utmost, but I cannot be for ever on the watch."

"Well, but what the devil has all that to do with it? You haven't spoken on the subject for, I should say, four years past;

and do you mean to insinuate that you were actually aware of her presence in Doverton ?”

“ I was aware that the woman Bertram had relations—at least one relative, now dead—living in some lone hovel near Black Rock.”

“ But you don’t mean to say that the—that my—that *she* is in any hovel,” exclaimed the Doctor, furiously.

“ My dear Doctor, I will explain all that I know if you will endeavour to calm yourself,” replied Blight, with his bland smile.

“ Calm myself !” broke in the Doctor, with still greater wrath. “ Calm myself !” he repeated, laughing bitterly. “ With this shameful *exposé* in view—with *my standing—my character!*”

“ Indeed, indeed, there need be nothing of the kind, if you will only follow the advice I gave you years ago.”

“ What ! to place her in an asylum ? How ? You’re a fool ! How can that be done without exposure ?”

“ Do you not remember what I advised as a safer plan ? The asylum was your own proposition.”

"To send her abroad? Well, but you told me afterwards that the woman wouldn't go."

"I know it; but there is no occasion, at least no necessity, for the woman to accompany her."

"How—send her alone?"

"No; I will take her myself, if you wish it. Only," continued Blight, as if in consideration, "the woman appears to me to be far more dangerous than the poor lady herself, and I don't believe she would part with her now even if your great charity were to cease in allowing such ample remuneration."

"Then I'm sure she sha'n't part with her," said the Doctor, firmly. "Where one goes, the other must. You had better see to it immediately; there's not a moment to lose. Only, with the *greatest secrecy*, the utmost caution—*such caution* as you well know how to use. But they must be got away without many hours' delay from this place, and, if needs be, there must be a little deception used, if you cannot do without it."

"Oh, I hope to do without that. Bertram is a sensible woman, and you doubtless would

not mind even adding a trifle, in your generosity, to the yearly stipend, as an inducement for her to leave England."

"That's for *himself*," thought the Doctor. "Mean, avaricious humbug!" But he dared not then show his contempt for him who could alone extricate him from his great difficulty. "I should have thought £200 a-year would have kept her charge as well abroad as in England, and better," he replied, carelessly; "and she has no relations to regret leaving. I don't suppose it matters to her where she lives. By the bye, you've not explained now how she came—*she* I mean"—he added, pointing to the portrait—"to be in the hovel on the beach; where are they? where do they lodge?"

"They have a nice lodging in a cottage about a mile from the other side of Doverton, near Kerlish."

Joan could hardly repress an exclamation of disgust at the lawyer's barefaced falsehood.

"And I suppose she has gone down there with Bertram at different times to see the

old man who is dead ; it was by meeting the woman in the direction of Gin Way, the last time I was here, that I became aware of their sojourn hereabouts, and she told me then that she intended going back to her home when he died ; she may be gone now for aught I know.” •

“ Why in the world didn’t you tell me of it, or force them away ? ”

“ I should have done so, only that she said she was going back again, and so I thought it best not to rouse any suspicion ; and there can be no harm done as yet, as you recollect she does not even know your name.”

“ But *her* — if *she* were to hear of it ! ” said the Doctor, glancing with a horrified expression at the picture again.

“ Ah ! I am quite as convinced as yourself that no time is to be lost. With your usual good judgment, you —— ”

“ D——n my judgment ! ” was the Doctor’s impetuous rejoinder ; “ just stick to business, will you ? ”

“ She is,” Blight went on without heed-

ing the impatience of his auditor, "as you are aware, completely lost to reason, therefore I don't know whether she would take any notice if she heard it ; but still——"

"*But !* I will have no more *buts !* Will you take the affair in hand immediately or not?"

"I was going to add that still we must get rid of them directly, and as luck will have it, I think I know of a very feasible way."

"There now ! that's the only sensible speech you have made to-night. What is it?" asked the slightly pacified Doctor.

"I should have thought of it before, my dear friend, only, really, this matter has taken me so much by surprise—to think of Mr. Ralph finding out that poor creature on the beach ; I suppose—dear me !—the ways of Providence !" And the sanctified lawyer turned his eyes towards the ceiling with a sigh.

"Well, never mind the ways of Providence now !" said the Doctor, impatiently. "What plan did you think of?"

"It will be one, I fear, of some difficulty, anyhow. But you may rely on me to act in this matter as in others I have undertaken for you, my friend—with all the foresight I can command. I know there is a vessel now in M—— harbour, which leaves there for America this week, I think ——"

"What day? There must be no delay. And if you manage this affair well, Blight, I will pay you handsomely; you shall name your sum," said the Doctor, brightening up.

"O, my kind good friend! I could not think of such a thing. You would wish me to go with them; otherwise I know the captain, and can trust to him?"

The lawyer's eye twinkled and he gave a sidelong glance at the Doctor, who still paced the floor; he had not sat down once during the interview.

Joan, in her eagerness to catch every syllable that Blight uttered, had unconsciously opened the door a little farther, and her master abruptly closing it as he passed, prevented her from hearing as distinctly the remainder of the dialogue. However,

she gathered sufficient of its purport to understand that Blight was to accompany the lady and her attendant to America, to see them conveyed safely to a party whom he mentioned as being related to him there, but whose name and identity were entirely fictitious, as may be supposed. That as soon as it was light he would go or see to what terms he could arrive with the woman Bertram, &c., and let the Doctor know them, and also the day the ship sailed. And that the sum he was to receive for expenses of the voyage, &c., was to be £500. And when this was settled, the Doctor, giving Mr. Blight a candle, told him the spare bed was waiting at his service.

Joan speedily mounted to her dormitory, there to lie and ponder upon what line of action it would be wisest to follow. On one thing she determined, to write to Miss Lindsay the next day—or rather on the present one, for it had begun—but she would ascertain, if possible, more particulars before doing so. That there was the embryo of some design of a dreadful nature in the

hardened breast of Blight—some plot which would not be revealed by its deviser to her master in its own dark colours—she felt morally convinced; and that that master would be thereby rendered a confederate, although an innocent one, of some daring and perhaps guilty act. She shuddered as she thought on the terrible deception this man had been practising for so many years with regard to the poor lost mother of Eve—whose tale of sorrow she only in part divined; and she would even then have arisen, in the impulse of her abhorrence at the perpetrator of such wanton cruelty and such dastardly fraud, in justice against the wretch who could thus feed upon the misery of his fellow-creatures, robbing a poor destitute creature of her rights, and betraying the confidence of his employer,—the man he called his “friend.” Yes; she would then have arisen and gone at once to her master, and, while tearing the veil from his eyes—the “veil of fallacy” he had worn for so long—she would have unmasked the hypocrite, and laid bare the web of sin and misery that

had been woven around him ; but Rose Lindsay's words of "caution" again resounded on her ear, and, on reflection, she deemed that there was wisdom in her warning, for in bringing such "darkness to light," might she not, as Rose had inferred, darken the days of those whose "future" would otherwise glide peacefully by.

We will not say that the Doctor, albeit he had worn that fallacious veil unsuspectingly, as, with strange contradiction, such characters will often wear veils prepared for them by those whom they utterly despise, yet have not the mental strength to thwart or to cast off,—we will not say that he in no wise doubted the veracity of Blight, for in some minor transactions he had entertained disagreeable impressions that he had been by him more or less duped ; but, harshly as he judged the world in general, he had never attributed to his legal adviser more craft or subtlety than he believed common to his calling. And how are we to believe men villains, however much may be our innate dislike of such, until we find them out in

their treachery? We have heard it said, "that we should treat all men as honest until we find them rogues;" and we have heard the opposite opinion given, "to treat all men as rogues until we find them honest men." We would obey the first precept with gladness, did not the "blight of the world" too often induce us to follow the second.

And so Joan fell asleep at last, with the resolution that "she would rest on the oars, awaiting the coming tide, and follow in its wake whither it should lead her." And the Doctor, did he sleep? No; in vain once more his eyes sought the balmy god, who flew with fright away. He, too, formed his plan of action. He had promised for some time past to visit an old friend some miles distant from Doverton, and thither he would journey on the morrow; he thought all at once a change would be beneficial to him, for a few days, or a week. And so, accordingly, after he had breakfasted and written a few lines for Mr. Blight, who had set out on his errand as soon as morning dawned, he departed on his own; he wished Mrs. Thornton

and Eve to go also; but old Mrs. Blue, having been taken suddenly ill a few days previously, the former declined leaving her mother for so long, and Eve could not go anywhere without her dear Aunt Rachel, who was, nevertheless, a good deal divided from her just now on account of the old lady; and it happened fortunately for Joan's vigil that it was so.

CHAPTER II.

“Her garb most sombrous doth Nature wear. . . .
. . . . The waters moan piteously, then dash with
maddening force upon the strand! And the wind
howls with threatening cadence—then carries all before
the cutting blast! The dark scene broodeth
fear. . . . Is man’s heart darker still?”

It was late in the day before the old servant could perform a project she had in view, namely, to walk to Black Rock, and put a few questions, carefully coined, to the widow Bertram, that she might be the better able to explain the extraordinary drift that affairs had taken to Miss Lindsay, with whom she hoped to be in time to communicate by that night’s post.

Although she feared that young lady would consider the case a hopeless one, and

matters having proceeded so far, she could not herself conceive in what manner they were to be mended without causing the exposure of the whole affair, unless in her present visit she could, by dint of persuasion and some indirect hints of approaching danger, cause the woman to move away—perhaps in the night for better security—with her charge, from the beach. She turned this proceeding over in her mind as she took her way along the dreary shore.

Although it was drawing towards the end of March, the cold was intense, and Boreas raged in all his fury ; snow-flakes fell ever and anon and blinded the old woman's eyes and numbed her limbs ; still on she went, we were going to say, with a courageous heart, and in one sense it might be correct, but, to speak truly, old Joan was not gifted with any peculiar moral courage, and, as she advanced, and her path became more desolate—all signs of life left far behind her—for, owing to the rough weather, there were no fishing-boats even to be seen, a feeling of utter loneliness took possession of her, which was

certainly not devoid of fear. She continually asked aloud, in order to reassure herself, "of what she could be afraid?" and a more violent gust of wind, or a still more angry roar from the sea, were her responses. The way, too, appeared so much longer than when she had last walked there, in the beginning of the winter, with her young lady and Miss Lindsay, which fact is of course easily accounted for.

To take a walk of even six or seven miles in company with a cheerful voice and on a fine morning is quite a different thing to performing the same alone and on such a day as the present. And then Joan remembered that she had still farther to go than before; she was yet within a few steps of the jutting rock where she had had to turn back so suddenly with Eve from the eyes of the maniac, the recollection of whose expression made her shiver afresh now. And she began to consider that this part was well-named, and that circumstance brought to her mind a legend which had been told of that spot for ages, how a murder had been committed

there—she should imagine at some short distance off, perhaps two miles—so deceptive are the sands—where the rock, assuming a darker aspect, ran ruggedly down into the sea—and there, it was told, at the self-same hour that the murder had been executed (one o'clock a.m.) a headless trunk was to be seen rolling up and down the rock until the present day. These thoughts did not inspire confidence into the heart of the old woman, which beat, to use her own expression, “enough to burst her body,” as, in walking quickly by the angle of the rock, she distinctly heard two men’s voices ; they appeared in earnest conversation, and she thought she heard one swear, but from whence the sound came, whether from the cliff above her or nearer, she was at a loss to conceive.

Trembling so that she could scarcely walk, and fully convinced that the Black Rock was indeed haunted, for the voices which she still heard seemed to proceed from some place close to her, she was about to make a desperate effort to hasten her steps

towards the little cabins now in view, where dwelt the object of her solicitude, when she was almost paralyzed with fear at the sound of footsteps quickly approaching from behind her, and, turning, she perceived a tall, powerful man, in sailor's garb, close at her heels ; and she also perceived, what struck her vision still more, although the spectacle was momentary, the form of "Blight" issue from under the rock (from the cave which was hidden there), and disappear upon the other side. This latter circumstance so surprised her, so overpowered her with consternation, that it enabled her to face the sailor with more composure than she otherwise would have done. Nevertheless, her face was quite blanched, and she felt speechless.

"Why, lawk, ma'am ! you look like to faint !" quoth the rough-looking form, coming close to her.

Although the speaker had an outcast, hardened look, there was a certain kindness in his voice and mien which is always welcomed as doubly dear from such a one, and

which poor Joan at that moment but little expected to find. A feeling of comfort, too, rushed to her heart, that from the way he had spoken, and from his manner as he offered her aid, she had not been perceived by either him or, what was worse, by his companion before. Yes, this was comfort ! And as the sailor asked her “ if she had walked far, and could he help her along ? ” she experienced a relief of mind she never in her after-life forgot. For, that Blight was about to enact some deed of a daring if not a violent nature, she felt more than ever convinced, and could easily surmise a not very pleasant *finale* to poor Joan, should she have watched him, or should he even have supposed that she stood in his way in the completion of it. For Joan could hardly credit to herself the vile light through which she had regarded that man of law, or, rather, lawlessness, since the disclosures that had been made. Poor Joan shrank with horror at supposing any man guilty of such offences—deceit and double-working. Alas ! simple-minded Joan little recked that, if a man is by

nature bad, he may go on in that profession from law into lawlessness, and sometimes, ay, prosper as he goes! Yes, for a season "the wicked prosper and no man layeth it to heart."

Joan, as soon as she could speak, thanked the sailor for his kindness, and asked if there was any place near where she could rest, having still some miles to walk—which was true, in her way back home. She would not, of course, now venture into the cabin, but endeavoured to make her companion suppose that she was a stranger in Doverton altogether. The sailor spoke of the "Gull" as the "nearest port," and remarked that he was going there for a "dodger" himself, and should be happy to bear her company.

At this she was much terrified, fearing that Blight might in some way yet discover that she had been at Black Rock, from which place she began heartily to wish herself many miles away. However, there appeared no other alternative; and, much as she dreaded entering the "Gull," which

she had heard spoken of as an abode of infamy, she had no other resource than to comply with the sailor's proposal, and comforted herself with the reflection, that she had heard an old friend of hers say "she remembered the wife of that bad Dacey a respectable 'servant-girl;'" and another of Joan's simple maxims was, that "if a man or woman had ever had *good* in them, there must be some of it, however little, remaining." So they trudged on, Joan asking the sailor some particulars respecting the village, &c., which she could have given far better than he. She told him her name was Johnson, because she thought, as it began with a J, it was not such a very great story after all. And presently they passed up the steep acclivity to the "Gull."

Joan had just glanced at the cottage in going by. There was no one to be seen there. But now, as ill luck would have it, she saw, in the shadow of the cliff above, the child—the grand-daughter of the good old fisherman—wending her way slowly upwards, carrying a parcel nearly as big as herself.

The snow was now falling fast, and the man, saying he would tell Mrs. Dacey a person was coming who wanted to rest for a while, added that he thought he'd go and help that child carry her goods to the village, and left Joan rather abruptly for that purpose.

Now, when he was gone, Joan thought over all that had happened, and came to the conclusion that she did not like the appearance of this latter movement of the sailor's at all. "Then he knew that child was going up into the village, and perhaps the poor lady and the woman had already gone!"

It was very strange; and she feared any further investigation was useless, and might prove dangerous. Still, she could not summon courage to turn back. If she went home directly it must be by the cliff, or she must turn in the direction of the village. She had hardly thought of this when a sudden turning brought her face to face with the "Gull," and there at the door, sure enough, stood the woman Dacey watching for her.

Now, as the reader knows, Mrs. Dacey's appearance was, at the period of our history, anything but engaging ; and so thought Joan on the present occasion, and wondered how she could have ever been respectable. There was such a forbidding air about the " Gull " itself and its dirty, scolding mistress, that the old woman did not feel much desire to make their acquaintance ; nevertheless, upon second thoughts, she imagined that it might be the means of gaining a greater insight into the working of Blight and the sailor, who, Joan doubted not, was his colleague. Accordingly, accepting the invitation of the hostess, she passed by the rough place called the bar, into a small apartment at the back, a kind of kitchen and parlour combined ; for, although it boasted of no carpet, but had merely a sanded floor, it possessed a rude couch with a torn cover, two stuffed chairs with broken arms ; and a few extraordinary pictures in black frames graced the walls. There were also shells, and some of much beauty, piled along the

mantelpiece, in a manner, as Joan noted, not void of taste.

Now, the perception of woman, in almost any rank of life, is usually keener than that of man. At all events, she frequently possesses a more vivid power in comparing the external or the outward seeming of persons and things with the internal—with things unseen — with the why and the wherefore of circumstances past and present. Joan, as soon as she had rested a few moments on one of the arm-chairs, which the woman drew, with some appearance of hospitality, towards the fire, remarked upon the “beauty of the shells, and the way in which they were arranged.”

The woman's attention had been taken up with a boy, a luckless imp, who seldom received aught but abuse; but turning sharply round as the above observation was made by her visitor, and, looking at her keenly, she said, “I was told you were ill from long walking; shall I get you a draught?”

Joan assented; and when the woman returned she answered her keen gaze in full. "I have heard old Mrs. Ransom, who lives in one of the Lee almshouses, speak of you," she said.

"I thought you were a stranger in these parts?" observed the woman, interrogatingly.

Joan coloured, remembering she had told the sailor the same.

"I thought it was strange. It isn't often we have lone women along the shore hereabouts. Where do you come from?" This was asked with a pair of very searching eyes (and not bad ones either), fixed upon Joan's countenance.

Now, the old woman, so far from having got rid of her tremor, considered her situation anything but a safe or agreeable one, and hardly knew which course to take for the best. So, like many others in such cases, she, instead of replying to the question asked her, made bold to ask one of her interrogator, and said, "Are we likely to be interrupted here?"

"Do you mean is anybody likely to come in here?"

Joan bowed her head.

"No, not in here. My husband is out on a cruise. I'll hope they'll put in somewhere to-night, the Lord help them!" And she crossed herself, thereby making old Joan still more uncomfortable, for she had a horror of Catholics. "It'll be a blustery night. I wish he was at home, for there's a bit of business going on I don't much like. He only went this morning. I don't expect him back till after to-morrow."

"Perhaps he can stop it then, if it's anything wrong."

The words came spontaneously from Joan's lips, but she almost regretted having used them; for the woman, looking at her suspiciously, exclaimed, "What do you know of it? Wrong? Who are you?"

"The fact is," said Joan, feeling she was now fairly *in for it*, and thinking it wise to make the best of a most trying situation, "I know of something going on wrong, and I am in a position to offer a very large

reward to any person who will quietly and with much secrecy manage to stop its taking place."

"Well, tell me who you are?" asked Mrs. Dacey again.

"No; that I cannot just now. I am a friend to you, at all events, and will be a greater one through my employer, if you can and will aid in this affair."

"Who is your employer? But we are talking in the dark. How do you know your affair is mine?—though something tells me it is," she added.

"I believe it is, although God only knows," replied Joan.

"Who is your employer?" repeated Dacey.

"A lady—a lady of much wealth; one who can offer, and will give, a good sum."

"Well, I've always thought that poor creature would turn out somebody," remarked the woman, with some excitement in her tone. "It is a dreadful thing—and there is nothing to be done—the time is so short. If my husband were here, I should

have hope, for he will do anything for gain; but Lord save me!"—and she crossed herself again—"he would murder me were I to interfere."

"Is the poor lady still upon the beach?" asked Joan.

"Yes, and *watched*, and will be till to-morrow night, and then——" and she stopped and shuddered.

"And then, *what*?" asked Joan, trembling with anxiety and fear.

"She is to be taken away," replied the woman, in a deep voice.

"Taken away to-morrow night. Where? Oh, dear! there is no time indeed. I shall be too late for to-night's post, and the only chance will be gone! But what do you mean?" continued Joan, growing ashy white—"where are they going to take her?"

"That's more than I can tell you; out to sea, unless there's a struggle, and *then*—God shield her!" Again the woman devoutly made the sign of the cross; and Joan, hardly knowing what she did in the terrible excitement of her feelings for the mother of

her darling, echoed the prayer, making the same motion of her hand, forming the "sign," which a few moments before she had despised. It was an appeal ; and whether from a Catholic or a Protestant, it might not have been in vain.

And now, "What was to be done ?" was Joan's cry, as, with hopeless gesture, she sank into the chair, from which, in her terror for the fate of the poor lunatic, she had arisen. Again did Mrs. Dacey endeavour to gain her name, and also that of her employer. It was in vain : upon this point, with a firmness which did the old woman credit, she refused to succumb ; merely repeating, with a truthfulness which shone in her visage, and which was never once doubted by her hearer, that she should be well rewarded for any stratagem she might conceive, in order to annul the infamous plot. But when Joan understood what arrangements had been made between "Blight" (whom the woman designated "Bruce") and his two votaries, who were each to receive a handsome reward from him, should they succeed in their

design -- which was no less a one than carrying off both women from the cabin on the beach, between the hours of twelve and one at to-morrow's midnight, and safely boarding them upon the "Fly" (which the woman at length confessed was little better than a pirate-vessel, her husband being then one of its crew), the poor old woman cried in despair. Perhaps she was right in her conjecture, that, where once "good" has abounded, it leaves a little of its essence, even when the clay is for the most part overgrown with rampant weeds. At least, in this instance, depraved as had become the form before her, callous as she may have usually appeared to the feeling of others, there was that within her, brought out by the effect of this interview with the faithful Joan, that stirred a deeper feeling than the love of gain. Still, the knowledge that gain might be derived in the emergency—greater gain than would otherwise fall to her husband's share in the diabolical scheme he was engaged in, increased her desire to lend what aid it might be in her power to bestow. Still, it was

with fear and trembling that she offered it, well knowing that her very life would be at stake should she fail to reap what she had now sown. But Joan, although she thanked the woman for her promise of succour, should it prove in her power to administer any, was far from consoled ; and, above all, she deplored that she had not come to Black Rock earlier in the day, although it appeared that all was for the best in her being brought to “the Gull;” and when she spoke of “returning home directly, and starting off by the last train to London, in quest of ‘the lady,’ to ascertain her opinion upon what was best to be done, although she feared it was useless now, as she could not get back till the middle of the next day,”—Mrs. Dacey brought pen, ink, and paper, and persuaded her to write then and there ; in that case, Miss Lindsay would have the letter by nine o’clock the next morning, and although, as Joan repeated, “she did not see that anything could be done,” she gladly complied, and with a parting repetition of promise of aid, should it be required, on the part of her hostess, she

shook hands, and hastened by the direction given, through Gin Way into the village, which she reached only just in time to post her letter, and then hurried on her way to Sea View, consoling herself that her long absence would not be heeded, as Mrs. Thornton and Eve had gone to old Mrs. Blue's, there to remain till the following evening.

And Joan went to bed, and at last to sleep, little dreaming that her feet had been upon a volcano!—that she had rested in the “Gull” upon the trap-door of a pirate’s cave! —Yes, underneath that door was a smuggler’s hoard—a motley accumulation of spirits, tobacco, and other contraband articles, some of a very questionable character; and remote from these, in an aperture hewn in the very bosom of the rock, lay—yes, start not reader in terror with the truth—lay *human bones*! yes, human bones! the flesh long since had dwindled from them—starvation had done its work, and they lay blanched and “blighted!” But we will dwell no longer upon such a scene.

CHAPTER III.

The sea was rough and the billows roared,
And a voice from the stormy deep
Cried, "hold! for the wrath of the ocean's God
Hath scared me from my sleep!"

.

A night in the "Gull," with a stormy sea—
Ah! many would shrink from it fearfully.
By the steep "Black Rock" there's an arm to save,
And an eye to watch o'er the true and brave!

"For this good deed, in future hour, a watch is set o'er
thee!"

THE clock on the landing at Sea View had just struck four; Joan had been wandering about all day like a troubled spirit, as she was, which could not rest. She was in an agony of thought regarding the terrible event that was to take place that night, and for

which there seemed no prevention. She could not settle to anything, and felt as we all do when we have a grief we must shut up in our own bosoms, miserably depressed and out of sorts with all around her. Susan, the housemaid, who had just come down stairs, from Miss Ending's bedroom, where Joan was sitting, trying to sew, made the remark, "that she had never seen the old woman in a worse humour."

There was a loud ringing at the gate bell, and Joan, glad of any movement to divert her, hurried to answer it herself. It was only Mrs. Blue's housemaid, sent up the hill to deliver a message from Miss Maria, "that Mrs. Thornton and Miss Ending would not be back that evening, probably not until the after-part of the day following."

Joan returned to her sewing in a more disconsolate mood than before; and after a while she muttered to herself, "What ever could I have expected?—that Miss Lindsay should send a person down on purpose to tell me what she thought? Really, I am an old

fool! I can't hear now till to-morrow morning." And she plied her needle silently for a few seconds, and then, sighing deeply, murmured, "What a world this is!—that poor creature, and the woman too, may be both murdered to-night, and none the wiser! They say all dark deeds come to light sooner or later; but law! I suspect such chaps as that dreadful Blight know how to do things secretly and surely. I'm sure I dread my future life, anyhow; for if I do ever hear she was killed, I shall for ever blame myself that I didn't go at once to Miss Rose. Yet what could she have done, alone? Only she has such a spirit! and she's so clever, she thinks of things nobody else would. Those sort of people are some use in the world! But still, I couldn't expect a young delicate lady to put herself out of the way, even though *life* is at stake; and nothing could be done, I'm sure—so I shall hear, I suppose, to-morrow morning."

Joan, however, was entirely wrong in her conjectures—not that she had altogether agreed in her heart to what her tongue had

uttered with regard to the present actions of Miss Lindsay.

"Joan," bawled Susan, as she passed the open door of Miss Ending's room, "there's a fly coming up the hill—do you think it's that cracked man to Major Soames's?"

Joan answered, indifferently, "that perhaps it was;" but as Susan passed on up the next flight of stairs, she crossed the landing to her mistress's bedroom, and looked, with a strange fluttering at her heart, towards the approaching fly, which, perhaps, as the reader may divine, contained no less a personage than that young lady, Rose Lindsay, who, delicate as she certainly was by nature, had nevertheless "a will to do and a soul to dare."

As soon as Joan perceived that it was indeed her whom she so desired to see, she flew down the stairs and stood by the open door, ready to receive her. A look passed between them as Rose alighted, indicative of caution on both sides; but great was the satisfaction exhibited in the countenance of the latter, as Joan whispered in her ear, as

they passed into the dining-room, that her uncle and aunt and Miss Eve were all from home.

"I am glad of that. Ah ! then, I have no fear," said Rose, who looked a rose indeed, so flushed was she with excitement. "But I had my tale ready, had they been here. *I have come for one of Mr. Ralph's pictures, you know*—and you must let all the servants know that immediately, and that I promised to go back by the last train to-night, that he should have it safely to-morrow morning. I am a wild girl, you know, as Aunt Thornton calls me, and therefore I can do these things at pleasure."

"But what in the world do you mean that you are going to do, Miss Lindsay ?" asked Joan, gazing at the animated countenance, in dismay.

"What am I going to do ?" repeated Rose, as if in surprise ; "why, what a question, Joan ! What did you send for me for ?"

"For help, dear Miss Rose—to know if there was anything to be done in this

terrible affair," answered the old servant, bursting into tears.

"Well, and now I suppose you want me to cry too—a pretty sort of help that, indeed!"

"Indeed, dear, dear young lady, I have passed through such a night and such a day, and I don't see what can be done now without exposing the wickedness of that cruel wretch!"

"His wickedness will be exposed, Joan, in God's own good time; and remember you have only the woman's word for what you say. She may have exaggerated the business, for motives of her own. However that may be, it is not for us now to determine. Whatever the crime intended, it is known to God; and He has said, 'Vengeance is mine—I will repay.' Our duty now, our urgent duty, is to prevent the 'waters from overwhelming the innocent,' 'to break the snare, that the bird may escape from the fowlers,' and we must remember that 'our *help* is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.'

Joan dried her eyes, and gazed in admiration on the enthusiastic girl, who she felt had decided the course to be taken, with a genuine conviction that the path was a right one; nevertheless, she trembled, as she replied, "Indeed, dear Miss Rose, He is a help,—there's no denying that; but I am anxious to know what you mean; you haven't employed any one, have you?"

"I have employed myself, Joan, and what good sense the Almighty has thought fit to give me."

"But, my dear Miss Lindsay, did you understand my letter, that two ruffians were employed to carry them away? What can *you* do, my dear young lady; are you mad? Excuse me this, but you cannot have understood!"

"Indeed, Joan," said Rose, smiling, "I have understood all about it; and I understand that this infamous plot of Mr. Blight's must, and *shall be defeated*; and I also understand that if I am mad, you must be so too; for you must go with me to-night."

"My dear young lady! impossible; it

will be certain death ; two weak women against two daring robbers—two ruffians—oh, Lord !”

“Joan,” said Rose Lindsay, solemnly, “you cannot feel for that poor creature as much as you would appear to do, or as much as you do for yourself. Think,—what do the men want with you ?”

“Ah ! that’s true enough ; and, as far as that goes,” said Joan, colouring up, “I am anything but a coward, I’m sure.”

“So I thought, Joan ; you have but to accompany me,—*leave the rest to me.*”

“But I’m sure, Miss Rose,” and here Joan spoke truly, “I’ve all along felt far more frightened for you than for myself. It’s true, although I’m an old woman, they might kill me, to get me out of the way ; but, oh, dear ! Miss, a fine young lady like you in the hands of those fellows !”

“But we must trust in God, Joan, that we fall not into their hands. I could not bring the sum of money with me that I wished ; but I can offer them a handsome reward, and so I can the woman at the Gull,

if she will give us shelter, and protect us till the morning, should we gain our object, which God grant we may."

Joan echoed the prayer, but she felt great misgivings at her heart, for the result of the venturous and bold act before her ; but the spirit of Rose Lindsay, once roused in a good cause, was not to be cast down by obstacles ; and after she had partaken of some slight refreshment, she went to lie upon the couch in the spare bedroom, to recover from the fatigue of her journey, before undertaking what she had prayed ardently for strength to accomplish.

In the mean time, Joan walked down the hill to Mrs. Blue's, and asked permission to "go up to London that evening, to remain until the next day, as her ladies did not intend returning till then." She went purposely, instead of sending a messenger, that the party at the "Grove House" might be kept in ignorance, for that night at least, of Miss Lindsay's arrival in Doverton ; and the purport of her visit could easily be explained afterwards by Joan, who tremblingly won-

dered if she should live to tell the same. But when, on her return, she found Miss Lindsay quite refreshed, and apparently in excellent spirits, *her* spirits grew higher in consequence, and Heaven knows they might well do so, for they had been below water-mark for many hours past. We will suppose the acute reader to perceive that Miss Lindsay's were a little forced in consequence of this latter fact.

Now, all was arranged. A fly had been ordered by Joan to be at the door at a quarter to ten (the last train left M—— station at some few minutes before eleven). This was done in order to do away with any suspicion that might be aroused in the breasts of the inmates of "Sea View;" and the only impression that the singular events of that evening had caused upon the minds of those respective persons, may be ascertained by the last remark of the gaping Susan that night, as she went dawdling up stairs to bed, dropping the grease from her candle at each step she took: "It's my belief, we shall have a wedding before long;

she wouldn't come down here for that little picture of a field and a cow, for nothing, I'll lay. That deep old card knows all about it, you may depend ; and that about her daughter being ill is all moonshine."

"I'll warrant that," chimed in the cook ; "she's only gone to see that young painter and wish him joy ; well, she'll make a fine, bonny bride (that young lady) anyhow, says I."

"Ah, that she will," agreed John, following at a respectful distance ; "and she's a good young lass as well as bonny." . . .

The subjects of these ruminations had by this time stopped their driver ; and the moon being then out (for the first time since they had quitted Sea View), Rose thought it a good opportunity to perform the first move in the difficult game she had taken in hand, by saying, "that as the night bid fair to be fine she should prefer walking." The man civilly urged the uncertainty of the weather, and foretold rain, should the wind abate, and that, if it came on, there was no place further on where they could possibly get a conveyance. But Miss Lindsay persisted in her

desire to walk, saying, "she felt so inclined for a good brisk one," &c. In vain the man argued that "the M—— road was very lonely."

They had now arrived half way through the long, straggling village; he received his full fare, for which he had begun to entertain some doubt, and, much consoled thereby, went back to his attic, and soon forgot all about the prognosticated dripping for the fair travellers.

Now, Rose looked at her watch and found it was barely the half hour past ten. "It will never take us an hour and a half to walk there, Joan," she said.

"I don't know, Miss; it'll take best part of an hour anyhow," returned Joan, whose articulation was not very plain, for she had begun to tremble all over as the direful crisis approached.

"Did you say between twelve and one?" asked Rose, firmly.

"Y—e—s, Miss," replied Joan; "oh, Miss! aren't you afraid?"

"Joan, I thought you told me you were

no coward !” exclaimed Miss Lindsay, with undisguised contempt ; “ I hope you don’t mean to fail me now—or you had better go back from whence you came, and I’ll undertake the whole affair myself.”

“ Indeed, dear Miss, I will not fail you ; but if anything were to happen to you, what should I do ? I have brought you into it, you know.”

“ If it is of that you are thinking, Joan, let your mind rest in ease ; I have no fear ; I scorn the very name of *fear*, in such a case as this ! Two women, however weak, ‘ in the right,’ must be a match for two men, however powerful, ‘ in the wrong ;’ and we know that ‘ the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted.’ ”

“ We do, Miss ; and your words seem to give me great courage. That is the turning leading to the cliff—it is further round than through Gin Way, but I really do fear your going through that horrible place to-night.”

“ I did not mean to go through it, unless we were tied for time ; and in this old cloak of yours and thick veil, I’ll defy any one to

know I'm anything but a poor woman. But come along, we ought to get either into the empty cottage or behind it by twelve o'clock, and I don't think we are much too soon."

And on they went, down one of the long, narrow, winding thoroughfares described in our opening chapter. Rose had, indeed, disguised herself; she had taken the flowers from her bonnet and put them into the reticule she carried, and the veil she wore was so large and thick, and she had so covered her dress with old Joan's cloak, that very few could have recognized the elegant Miss Lindsay.

As they drew nearer the ocean, the wind blew in sudden gusts, which were at times so powerful as to impede their progress greatly; and when they gained the cliff, it became so boisterous as to induce them to look out immediately for some pathway by which they might descend to the shore. The tide was midway. Luckily it had lasted fine, but the moon, ever and anon disappearing coquettishly behind a cloud, rendered their onward journey a dark and dangerous

one. At last they found a break in the cliff ; it was steep and rugged, still it seemed preferable to descend than to proceed longer where they were, where at intervals the wind threatened to blow them over the precipice in its fury.

They managed the descent with much difficulty, and the exploit took up some time. It had been effected almost in silence, for even Rose Lindsay's breast was not, in this instance, altogether free from fear. It was a wild night, and the hour, with its intervening darkness—its whirling wind and roaring waters—was sufficient to inspire a stout heart with the sense of dread. But as soon as they had gained the strand, she spoke cheerfully, although the palpitation at her heart for some moments almost choked her utterance. For the last three or four feet they had to slide down the declivity as best they could ; and old Joan was so shaken and frightened, that she had to sit down upon the sand for a few minutes, quite overcome. When the moon appeared again, Rose endeavoured to look at her watch.

When she did yield her rays, they were very brilliant, and lit all up as "bright as day;" but the clouds floated angrily over her, and the approaching one was dense and threatening. It wanted but twenty minutes to midnight; and Joan, having a little recovered from her exertion, they proceeded at a brisk pace along the beach. They soon reached the two lone cottages, and judged it would be the safest plan to conceal themselves behind the empty one.

They had not long to wait. Rose had just remarked that "she should not think a boat could live in such a sea," when a dark speck was visible approaching the shore. The thick cloud had partially dispersed, but a heavy gloom obscured the survey of all surrounding objects. For a moment, it appeared as though Miss Lindsay's supposition was correct—for the object on which her straining eyes were fixed was lost to view, but in the next it reappeared on the top of a monstrous wave, which brought it considerably nearer to its destination, again to be driven back by the adverse tide of the angry waters.

The spot on which Rose Lindsay and her companion stood had been formerly a trim little garden, where potatoes and cabbages had flourished under the sheltering cliff ; but since the hand which had tended it for so long had been claimed by its kindred dust, it had sunk into a place of vile refuse, where stale fish and decaying vegetables lay incorporated with rags and rubbish. The cabins themselves were very old, and merely separated by a nogging. In the further one lay now the poor lunatic, the cause of all this wild adventure — the unconscious harbinger of future joy, and the fountain of future woe.— She was wrapt in a slumber, peaceful as any child's. Who shall say what her midnight dream should be ? Smiles played around her mouth, contentment sat upon her brow, although her coverlid was of coarse sacking. Mrs. Bertram had been busy ironing—ironing a few worn garments to forward to her niece on the morrow—the little girl with whom our readers are already acquainted, and who had been placed in the village-school by the liberal hand of one who signed him-

self "Anonymous." It was a great comfort to the widow's mind, as the teacher of the school was one whom she slightly knew ; and arrangements had been made by the "Anonymous" for the child to reside with that young person, as the distance was far from her home. Mrs. Bertram, as the reader may remember, had refused a like offer once before (from her who stood now, with beating heart, in the piercing wind outside her dwelling), but after her refusal she had believed herself selfish in denying the poor child the advantages of education, which was not in her power to bestow ; and when the present offer came, written so kindly, she had sent a grateful answer by the bearer of it, of acceptance, not without an idea that it might have proceeded from the same party. So, with a heart somewhat easier than usual, the good woman sought her couch ; and, after gazing on the sleeping form beside her with a tearful eye and an honest prayer upon her lip, she sank into repose.

Deeper the shadow fell o'er rock and ocean ; yet, on the pebbly beach, in the dim

light, could Rose behold two forms approaching ; and with a feeling perhaps some who read this work may have realized—a feeling of *charm*, from the *very danger* of her position—she said, courageously, “Now, Joan ! nerve your heart, and follow me.”

Joan obeyed. Miss Lindsay walked firmly, and with a queen’s dignity, round to the front of the cottage, in which lay the two helpless women.

The reader may not have forgotten the little garden and the entrance-gate. In front of the latter the bold girl stationed herself, pushing inside the gate behind her ; her shaking attendant, who, though trembling with fear, nevertheless remonstrated upon this proceeding, “that her dear young lady should have all the danger.” In spite of all the perplexity around her—in spite of all (too frightful to contemplate that might be hanging over her head), Rose broke into a genuine laugh at the idea of “Joan’s protection ;” and then adding, authoritatively, “Do as I tell you ; keep close behind me,” she, to the old servant’s bewilderment, disrobed

herself of the cloak and veil. The two forms were now advancing up the ascent before described, and were within a few feet of where Miss Lindsay stood. Rose looked despairingly at the cloud which still concealed the moon, but to her joy she perceived that it was quickly passing, and its density fast evaporating. When the foremost figure had gained the ascent before her, she noted that he was tall and powerfully made, but in vain she tried to trace his features; her's, even, were far from distinct, although she faced the "goddess of the night." She could not even judge then by the "eye," which is mostly truthful, of what kind of being she was addressing, and, framing her speech at random, she said, resolutely, "You have come to take away, by force, two innocent women."

"We have, but you're not one of them," replied the man gruffly, yet not without a degree of wonder in his tone.

"No, I am not one of them; and I have come to offer you double of what you are now to receive if you will desist from this

infamous abduction ; plainly, if you will leave these poor creatures, who have done you no harm, alone."

"Hoity, toity !" exclaimed the second comer, advancing to the side of the former ; "and who are *you*, to promise ? Come out of the way ; we've no time to lose."

The speaker was short and thick-set, and, from his gait, Rose surmised he had been drinking. He seemed, however, to be perfectly aware of what he was saying, as he repeated, "Come out of the way, d'ye hear ! or we shall have to take you too."

"Do you quite understand what I promise ?" asked Rose, in no way intimidated, and firmly maintaining her post.

"I will give you £500, £600, even £700 ! if you will give this up. You shall name your own sum," she added, remembering the bounty of her Uncle Lindsay's heart.

"Come, come," began the smaller, but the more ferocious ruffian.

"Hold your jaw, Bill, for a moment, can't ye ?" cried the taller of the twain.

"How are we to tell you'll keep your promise, pretty one? for though the moon's sulky I can twig your bright eye."

"I am an heiress; I have an uncle whose riches ——"

"D—n your uncle," broke in the short man; and then, with a fearful oath, he demanded, "if his mate was going to stand there all night? Because I'm not," he continued; "and so, once more, out of the way, or I'll ——"

The moon burst forth from its hiding place and poured its glorious beam full upon Rose Lindsay's brow—"Touch a hair of her head at your peril!"—were words spoken in stentorian voice by the first comer, and the two men commenced a violent struggle. Momentarily Joan recognized the sailor of the preceding day—and Rose, *the road-side beggar whom she had clothed and fed*. And in that hour of peril the words rose in her breast:—"Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." It might have been from inebriation, or from the excitement of being thwarted in his purpose, that

the shorter man became frantic, and grappled like a wild beast. It appeared as much as ever the sailor could do to hold him off; and, at length, by some dexterous movement, escaping from his antagonist's grasp, he made a bound towards Miss Lindsay; but the other was at least his equal in agility, for, pulling him back with sudden violence, they rolled over one another to the bottom of the ascent far more speedily than they had gained its summit. All this took less time to happen than it has done to relate. Joan's scream had been long and shrill, as the rush was made to where Miss Lindsay still stood; the rocks re-echoed the cry, and a loud "Holloa!" from the cliff above responded to it.

As the men wrestled, Joan's voice again shrieked "Murder!" with still greater vigour, and this time it was answered by the report of a double-barrelled gun. The ball flew, as Rose thought, close past her head; and relaxing her convulsive hold of the gate, she fell back swooning into the old servant's arms. For a few moments only her senses deserted her; and when she

recovered them, the two men had already regained their boat, and were pushing with frenzied energy from the shore. The moon, as if in mercy, still afforded her light. The shouts continued louder and louder from some person or persons (as it appeared to those anxious ears below) who were descending rapidly from the cliff.

Down the steep rugged pathway it came—nearer and nearer. Oh ! was it friend or foe ?

“Surely it could not be the latter, or those dreadful men would not have thus departed.” So thought old Joan, and she was right.—Whose was the manly form, gun in hand, now mounting the rocky bank ? Whose the kind voice, as, panting and breathless, he reaches the little gateway?—

“Great God ! Miss Lindsay ! *Rose Lindsay* !—You here !”

It was that of Ernest Morley. And Rose’s almost inaudible but emphatic reply was, “Oh ! thank God you are come ! Thank God—*thank God* !”

In our desire to avoid suspense during the late exciting scene, we have omitted to

state that the poor woman Bertram, aroused by the tumult, had stood at the little window of her dwelling in a frame of mind impossible to describe. From what had passed she had, in some measure, divined the truth ; and now that the conflict was over, she stood supporting Miss Lindsay, who still trembled so that she was unable to stand. By Morley's aid she was soon within the cabin, where a hasty explanation took place on either side. We cannot paint the gaze of admiration bent upon Rose Lindsay from Ernest's overflowing eyes as Joan, who was the better able to speak, related what had taken place, carefully avoiding, at a sign from the former, all mention of the names of those connected in any way with the affair. Ernest hurriedly told how he had come down by the last train to M——, his old tutor being very ill, and how, as there was no fly to be obtained without waiting a long time there, he had proceeded along the cliff with his gun, which he always brought with him to Doverton to shoot sea-fowl. He had been going to leave it at the station ; but feeling

a desire to see a good rough sea, he had come along the cliff instead of through the village, and deemed it desirable to have that as a companion, and how rejoiced they all were that he had come to that conclusion !

And now the matter on hand, the urgency of which all felt, was to remove the poor lunatic without delay from her rough home upon the beach. She had been awoken by the report of the gun, and sat up in the bed, with her large eyes fixed on vacancy. With her long hair flowing round her, and her white night-dress, she looked like some spirit of another world—like the image of one which had appeared not very long ago to the Doctor's troubled vision in his mansion at Sea View. She took little heed of those who stood around her. Mrs. Bertram and old Joan commenced dressing her with all speed ; and Rose, whispering to the former to take with her but a few necessaries, as all would be amply provided for both the poor lady and herself whither they were going, returned to Ernest Morley, to whom she was now enabled to state more fully the strange

occurrences of the last few days, as described to her by Joan. She could only imagine (not being aware, as the reader is, of all the particulars of the past) that the poor inmate of the cottage was her uncle's first wife, whom he had abandoned on account of her great affliction.

"This," she said, with a shudder, "seemed to her the most dreadful part of the affair. Not that," she added, "she had ever *loved* the Doctor, or even regarded him in the light of an uncle; yet she had believed him upright, and his mind to be above dishonourable actions."

Morley observed that the case was wrapt in mystery. He did not put upon it exactly the construction Miss Lindsay did, but he quite coincided with her opinion that all regarding the event should be kept in inviolable secrecy.

Mrs. Lindsay had been informed the preceding day of all that her daughter knew of the sad tale of the "Lady of the Beach," and had kindly promised to receive both her and her attendant. There was no fear of a word

of the matter passing her lips ; for she truly sympathized with Rose in the belief that the knowledge of it would be the death of good aunt Rachel. Still she had but small idea of the wild adventure her daughter had contemplated — the daring deed she had proposed enacting, unaided and alone !

While Morley in his heart praised Rose for her heroism, he with his lips admonished her for her rash intrepidity.

“ Consider,” said he, “ how your life was endangered.”

“ Well, if I had lost it,” she replied, “ it would have been in a good cause, and not much consequence to any one.”

He did not speak, she looked up, and met his questioning reproving glance, and the warm blood flew over her pale cheek and brow.

Now time was flying, and the little party hastily quitted that lonely cabin, and took their way along the rough bank. Morley did not altogether feel disposed to place much confidence in the veracity of the hostess of the “ Gull ;” he inwardly con-

ceived it very possible that she had meant to deceive Joan in some way had Miss Lindsay gone there unprotected, but both the old servant and Mrs. Bertram appeared to rely upon her faithfulness ; and, upon reflection, there appeared no alternative, for there was no other shelter for miles around, and Miss Lindsay looked sadly to require the rest she truly needed after the fatigue and excitement she had passed through. According to her desire Morley and Joan led the way on either side of Lady Vernon, and she followed with Mrs. Bertram. The wind had a good deal abated, but the sea was even more boisterous than before, and the waves, as they rose one over another, lashing each other in their fury on to the rocky bed, looked, with their white crests, like water-spirits aroused from the slumbers of the deep, and glorying in their glittering revels. The moon still shed her lustre, for the clouds were more stationary overland, but over the ocean all was pitchy blackness, and Morley observed, "That he feared there was a fearful storm out at sea."

The roar of the waters was so great that no one heard his remark save Joan, who, in consequence, gazed around her. They were close to the craggy turning up the cliff leading to the "Gull," and the dark slanting rock she had noticed yesterday lay boldly out before them in the pale rays of the moon. Again the legend attached to it took possession of her mind, and owing, perhaps, to the recent shock her nerves had sustained, she actually imagined that she could distinguish human limbs of huge proportion on the summit of the rock, and passing her arm behind the poor unconscious lady she led, she grasped that of Mr. Morley, saying, with alarm, "Look, sir, isn't that like a man's arm on the top of that black rock?"

Morley could not refrain from smiling, solemn as was the hour, the scene, and the enterprise he was engaged in.

"It must be a good big man that, Joan," said he. Then he continued seriously, "You ought to think too much of the 'Heavenly Arm,' that has shielded you to-night, to indulge in foolish fears of any earthly one."

"I am sure I do, sir—dear me!—I thought Miss Lindsay would be killed, but it was *your* arm saved us, sir!"

"The Heavenly One directed mine, Joan—but here we are; I think I see this 'Gull;' it's a strange, solitary place. I never remarked it as I flew down here. Now—caution! *caution!*" he continued, turning to Mrs. Bertram, "let no one speak till I see how matters stand here."

They approached—the moonbeam fell dimly on the angle of the rock in which stood the "Gull." All was silence; there was no light visible, and for the first time a feeling of awe ran through Rose Lindsay's frame. She had been greatly alarmed at the report of the gun—at the fierce struggle with the men, but the feeling which had then shaken her mental powers and caused her to swoon, was a very different one to that which agitated her bosom now. She had heard of the "Gull" more than once, as of a place of rapine and plunder, and the utter silence and desolation of the place inspired her with a dread of confronting the interior of so suspicious and gloomy

an abode; and this feeling was augmented to distraction, as she considered that, perhaps, in that dreary retreat, the man, who might that night have saved her by his timely aid from a violent death,—the man, who she felt was still dearer to her heart than ever,—might himself prove the victim of some dark villany. Tremblingly she laid her hand upon his arm, whispering, “Cannot we walk on?”

“Where to, dear girl?” was the reply, in the same tone as her own. “Fear not,” he continued, pressing the little hand he had taken; “a brave, true heart is God’s delight. He will not cease to watch over you.”

With these words, Morley knocked at the door, which at first he could not find, for the lower part of the dwelling was deeply shadowed by the overhanging cliff. He knocked with his fist, for there was no knocker. His appeal was answered almost immediately by the woman Dacey, who carried a candle, stuck into an old bottle, which she held aloft that she might inspect the faces of the intruders.

"You promised," began Morley, somewhat sternly——.

"*I did promise*, and I'm quite ready," she broke in ; "praised be God !" she added, crossing herself, "that it's a squally night ; there's no fear of the 'Blue Boy,' or 'Brawly Bill.' If my husband heard of this, my head would be in a noose, and mayhap drawn."

"Well, well, my good woman, after all, you are only giving shelter to rather late visitors, or rather early ones I should say, for morning has begun, I reckon ; you shall be well repaid."

He spoke cheerfully, for he felt the little hand he still held in his own, trembling more and more.

"This young lady is very tired. I want something got ready for her immediately. Are you quite alone ?" he continued, seeing the woman, after she had bolted and barred the door, give a hurried side glance into the bar, as she passed it, leading the way to the back apartment where Joan had sat.

She paused, and retracing a step or two up the narrow passage, held her light up,

so as to disclose the interior of the compartment to the view of her guests. A large bloated-looking man lay full-length upon the ground, snoring heavily.

"There!—there's no fear of him, ha! ha!" laughed the woman, as if in amusement at the surprise and alarm exhibited in the countenance of old Joan, who cried, "O good Lord! what a monster!"

"He'll do you no harm; *I've wound him up tight enough for some hours to come.*" And thus saying, the mistress of the "Gull" proceeded into the small sanded parlour at the back. "Now, you see, I've prepared for you," said she, pointing to the hissing kettle on the hob, and spirit bottles, and loaf and cold meat upon the table. "This is what I got ready for the lady," she continued, looking earnestly at Rose, who had sunk exhausted on the chair over the *pirate's cave*. "I didn't expect to be honoured by a gentleman."

"I came at an opportune moment," said Morley, with much dignity; "just in time to save that lady from much insult. I shall

stay and protect her to-night, as this place is strange to her ; not but what I hope she could do well under *your* protection." He looked keenly into the woman's face as he spoke, who it struck him was not altogether free from drink herself.

" O your honour, you're safe enough here, I tell you, for a good twelve hours yet. There may be a 'call,' and you'd better not show yourselves, that's all. I've only got to answer a word—a question—and the Father absolve me ! I must tell a lie, I suppose."

" What is that ?—what question ?" demanded Morley.

" Bruce will call to know if 'all's right,' " answered Dacey, nodding towards the poor lunatic, who had lain down upon the sofa, fancying she was in her bed again.

" That poor creature must have rest, or she will not be fit for the journey," observed Miss Lindsay, speaking for the first time.

" And you—you must take some of this," said Morley, pointing to the viands ; " and

then you must have rest, I'm sure." But Rose firmly refused to leave the parlour.

The woman, whose air of excitement had a good deal subsided since their entrance, explained that her bed was at Miss Lindsay's service, and that another apartment was in readiness for Lady Vernon and her attendant, and Joan should have the small crib she herself meant to use, if she liked.

"What, have you three bedrooms over here?" asked Miss Lindsay, curiously.

"Yes, my lady; two as large as this, and one our Jack tumbles down in; but I put him here to-night." So saying, she, to the great consternation of all present, pulled aside an old torn curtain, which Joan had supposed, the day before, to conceal a window, and she opened a door behind it, again holding the candle overhead.

This time, Morley himself echoed old Joan's exclamation of surprise, at the sight of an apartment, some twenty feet in length, apparently excavated from the cliff. It was very low and narrow, and seemed nearly filled with large empty barrels and wine

kegs ; upon two or three of the foremost lay the boy, Jack, in a deep sleep, whom their hostess informed them, she had also “ pulled quite tight.”

Miss Lindsay kept firm in her resolution to remain below ; although she went up the narrow staircase for a few moments, to see her poor *protégée* made comfortable for a few hours’ rest, and to persuade Mrs. Bertram to lie down beside her. Joan had remained in the little parlour with Morley, whose anxiety was great upon Miss Lindsay’s account ; and her worn pale look, when she descended, gave ample cause for the same. She had hardly entered the sanded parlour, before Mrs. Dacey (who had disappeared, after showing Rose the two bed-rooms, which were decently if not comfortably furnished,) rejoined them, and saying, that if, after the lady had taken some refreshment, she would like to see further of the “ Gull,” she would have much pleasure in showing the same, &c. Morley was on the point of declining this civility, for he wanted to persuade Miss Lindsay, when all was quiet,

to go and take some rest, while he remained on the watch ; but Rose, who began to like her strange-mannered, wild-looking hostess much better than first sight had portended, expressed a wish to be enlightened there-upon with the mysteries of this intricate dwelling. Morley persisted in her taking something a little hot and comforting before doing so, and in such a manner that she dared not refuse. It was astonishing the delicious feeling she experienced among all that was wild and adventurous around her, in the knowledge that she had such a protector ; his manner was like that of a fond brother, and made her feel so perfectly at ease in leaning on his advice. He was about to mix poor Joan also something to restore her nerves to their usual tenor, when Mrs. Dacey remarked, " It was on account of this that she had spoken, for she had arranged for Joan to sup with her ; but she could see," she added, with something of a flash in her wild, but still beautiful eye, " that she was mistrusted, although the Lord of Heaven only knew," she said,

“what it might cost her to have served them.”

Morley spoke in grave accents, but looking kindly upon her, “You cannot be surprised that we should feel a degree of mistrust and apprehension; not on your account, because we hope for better things from one of your sex; and we trust to you to acquaint us, should there be anything approaching to danger during our sojourn here, either for ourselves, or the poor lady up stairs. We look with pity upon you, as upon one who has, in an untimely hour, perhaps, turned from the right way. There is no joy out of that way, and if at a future time you should prove this truth, and wish to return to it, you have true friends here, who will help you along.”

There were bright drops glistening in the woman's eye, as she answered, “Ah, sir! I wish I'd heard you speak four years ago.”

“It is never too late to listen to what we feel is right,” said Morley, “for God has said, ‘though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as wool.’”

It was strange, and even affecting to see the humbled expression of the woman's countenance, as she led Morley and Rose, followed by Joan, up the winding stair, to make them still more acquainted with the hidden haunts of the "Gull." She opened what appeared a cupboard, in the little room, containing the hammock in which "Jack," she said, "usually tumbled;" and pushing aside a shelf, a door flew back by a spring from behind it, disclosing to view an apartment similar to the one beneath it, save that it might be some three or four feet less in length. A wooden slab extended from one end to the other, supported by truckles, with rude benches placed on either side, one of which had been drawn close to the hearth, on which some coal and peat were glowing. On the other side, facing the entrance, in a high-backed wooden chair, sat, cowering over the blaze, an old man, *so very old*, so thin and shadowy, that he looked as though his term of this life had long ran out, and he only remained here now on sufferance.

"That's the *Bat*," exclaimed Dacey, seeing the attraction of all the eyes present; and Rose Morley, as they advanced, understood the meaning of the appellation—he *was stone Blind*, and his sightless balls were strained upon the blaze.

"Are you cold, poor old man?" asked Rose, in a tone of pity.

"It's no use speaking to him—he's deaf as a brick," said the woman, "and he's not fit for such as you to touch," she added, seeing Rose lay her hand kindly on the attenuated shoulder.

"Who is he?" asked Morley.

"He's nobody now," answered Dacey, laconically, as she produced a trencher on which was a loaf of bread and some dried fish, remarking, as she did so, "that dozens had supped there off richer dainties." She then took from a closet two stone bottles, and, turning to Joan, asked her "to seat herself, and eat and drink."

"This 'Gull' is a wonderful place," observed Morley; "are there any more concealed places in it?"

"None that I can show you, and for what I have shown I might lose my life; but *you trust me, and I will trust you.*" And Dacey looked penetratingly into Morley's face.

"You give me your word that you expect nobody here this night but the man you call Bruce?" demanded he, answering her gaze.

"Nobody. *The black spirit of the Rock rolled half way down before midnight*; there's a heavy swell in the 'ringing waters,' they'll put in by the 'Elf Isle,' and even if it were not so, and the 'Fly' herself were to cast anchor, *I could hide you all.*"

Morley felt that he would much rather not be hidden, but Rose had been so much taken up in watching the old man, she had hardly heard what passed.

"Where does he sleep?" she asked. The woman pointed to a truck-bedstead in a farther corner. "But he often sits like that all night—he's in one of his 'dummies' to-night, and he won't lie down; it's no use meddling with him."

"Poor old man!" exclaimed Rose again, while her eyes grew very moist with sym-

pathy. "What a wretched life! Has he been here long?"

"Many years—but, bless your beautiful face! I tell you again he's not fit for you to come near."

"What has he done then?" persisted Miss Lindsay, still standing over the decrepit man, with her hands clasped like some pitying angel.

"*Things that would make your flesh creep to hear!*"

"Oh, dear, what a pity he does not die!" said Rose, in appealing accents.

"Ah! that's all he says—'*I can't die!*'—but this is no place for you." In which opinion Morley seemed perfectly to agree, for, taking Miss Lindsay's hand, he led her with gentle force away. When they were again in the little sanded parlour, the first thing he did was to insist upon her eating some sandwiches, which he cut as temptingly as he could from the somewhat stale meat upon the table, and then folding her up in Joan's large cloak upon the little couch, he desired her, as if she had been a little child, to close

her eyes and try to go to sleep. But poor Rose's mind was wrought up to such a pitch of excitement with all she had gone through and since seen, that it was long before she could even keep her eyes shut. She had been told not to talk, in a very decided voice, by her protector, and so she lay for a long while with her eyes just a little way open, watching him pondering upon the miraculous way in which he had been sent to deliver her from evil, and to assist her in the accomplishment of her adventurous undertaking. Mrs. Dacey had agreed that, as soon as it was light, Jack should (if they could rouse him sufficiently) put the horse (which was a wretched, meagre animal) into the cart "which they kept," she said, "for market purposes," and convey the poor Lady Vernon and her attendant safely to the M—— station, there to remain till the arrival of Miss Lindsay and Mr. Morley, for whom a fly was to be sent as far as the 'cross roads,' which the reader doubtless remembers met about three quarters of a mile distant from Black Rock. Joan was to go in the

cart as far as the end of the village, from whence she was to send the fly before proceeding on her way homewards.

What Morley mostly feared regarding this arrangement, which appeared the only one to follow, was the gossip which would naturally take place in consequence of a young lady and gentleman being found walking and riding together so very early in the morning. But Joan was a clever old hand at inventing a tale; and as all the village knew of Mr. Morley's sudden visits to his old tutor, and Miss Lindsay's no less frequent ones to Sea View, she could easily make it appear how the latter had wished to return to London by the first train from M——, and how the former had offered to accompany her, and how she had been sent on to order the fly to meet them, and she determined upon securing one from a party who had only lately arrived in Doverton. So, after all, it was to be hoped, no great scandal would follow. As to Rose, she made up her mind to take that part of the matter

very coolly. Even if anybody she knew did happen to go by that train, she could see no harm in travelling under the protection of Ernest Morley; and especially, alas! "as he was the promised husband of Emily de Vere. Oh! was he?—could it be *true*?" painfully she asked herself, still watching him as he sat there, with his kind, handsome face, looking so contented—yes, contented, with all the horrors of the "Gull" and the Black Rock around him! And she, strange to say, experienced a sensation of happiness, a thrill of joy, in that den of horrors, she had never known before, as she lay there, watched over by the man she loved best on earth.

Some of our lady readers will perchance condemn her for want of delicacy in not retiring to one of the chambers above; but we would like, with those ladies' permission, to place them in Miss Lindsay's position, and we grieve to say, we fear that many would hardly have nourished the disinterested feelings which then stirred the bosom of Rose Lindsay; for, with a dauntlessness which

she smiles at now—ay, and will smile at to her dying day—she believed that, should danger arise—should that “Gull” reveal treachery—she could have defended, with her heart’s blood, the life of Ernest Morley!

CHAPTER IV.

"Oh! we have saved her, and a brighter day is opening o'er her!"

"I tell thee I will surmount all obstacles, and gain *a name!*"

"Rosey, do you mind my smoking a cigar?" asked Morley, at length, perceiving those tell-tale eyes fixed upon him.

The reader is aware that Miss Lindsay had no objection to smoking; had it been otherwise she would hardly have been the chosen heiress of General Lindsay's wealth.

Morley lit his cigar, shaking his head at those naughty eyes still open. Old Joan and Mrs. Dacey had both gone to rest; the latter requesting Morley to call her, should

he hear a knock, which, however, that gentleman had no intention of doing.

He had scarcely begun to smoke, when Rose remarked, — “ that she heard horses’ feet coming down the pathway,” and almost immediately after there was a sharp knock at the door, as if given by the butt-end of a riding-whip.

Desiring Rose to keep perfectly still, Morley walked to the door, candle in hand, and opening it, discovered a man on horse-back, close to the threshold. He held the candle aloft, as the woman Dacey had done on their entrance, and was not in the least startled as the new-comer pronounced his name ; but if he was not startled, the rider was ; and thrown completely off his guard by the sudden apparition of Mr. Morley, who could easily perceive, in spite of the large countryman’s coat and slouched hat the other wore, together with the thick yellow-haired wig, whiskers, eyebrows, &c., that the speaker was no other than Mr. Blight.

"Mr. Morley!" repeated he in unfeigned astonishment.

"Well, Mr. Blight," quoth Morley, laughing, but feigning equal surprise; "this is a strange meeting; I certainly didn't expect to see you here any more than I guess you expected to see me. My friend and I have not long been here: we put up here, thinking a storm was brewing; and, not feeling much inclined to get drenched—it's a rum place, anyhow! I don't much admire it. But what on earth do you do here in that strange attire?"

"O, Mr. Morley," said the man of law, with admirably assumed *nonchalance*, "you have no idea what we poor fellows, in our profession, have to do sometimes to disguise ourselves, in order to bring rascally tenants to their senses, and right our employers; all hours and seasons, you know, for us," continued he, displaying his bland smile, or grin, in spite of the thick yellow moustache which completely covered his thin lips when closed. "I am off to-

morrow to America on pressing business, and wished to get some little matters of the good Doctor's righted before I went. I really wish he'd give up that property in Gin Way; it's a vile neighbourhood—not safe for any one to pass through undisguised, especially at night. My time presses," he continued, hurriedly; "will you tell the woman here I want a word with her? These fellows constantly resort here, you know. It's a bad place, Mr. Morley."

"So I should think," said Morley, coolly. "I don't know where the woman is now; just as my friend and I entered—an hour ago, I should think—there was a terrible commotion here: some ruffians had made an attempt to carry away, by force, two poor women from the beach."

"Ha!" ejaculated the lawyer.

"The woman was here a little while after, but there was such a to-do, they all seemed beside themselves. The two women have been rescued, I hear, but the commotion has only just subsided hereabouts. I expect there are scouts about from the village. It

was found out by a party from the cliff, I understand."

"Indeed! have they gone up into the village—the woman Dacey I mean—have the men escaped, do you know?" were questions poured forth in one breath by Blight.

Morley thought proper to answer only the latter one. "No; I should say it was next to impossible that they could escape, from what I heard," he said, thinking of the roaring angry waters.

"Good night—good night, friend; my time is so precious! but, really, this is a sad affair." Blight held out his hand as he turned his horse's head, but Morley evaded it, asking "if he should get him a glass to help him on?" but the other, with ill-concealed alarm, hastily thanked him in the negative, and putting spurs into his horse's sides, galloped frantically up the rocky pathway, and Morley could soon hear the poor beast's feet in the distance, as it tore on with maddening speed.

Once more securing the door, drawing the

heavy bolts across it, he turned to proceed into the little parlour, when, to his surprise, Rose issued from the dark bar, with a face of ashy paleness. "Oh, thank God! he is gone!" she said.

"Of what were you afraid?" asked Morley, leading the agitated girl back to the fireside.

"I was afraid he'd murder you, or something, supposing you had something to do in the defeat of his wicked design."

"If he had," remarked Morley, with an arch glance at the speaking face before him, "*I should have died in a good cause, and it wouldn't have been of much consequence to any one.*"

"You are unkind," said Rose, with a vivid blush and a little pout of her lip.

"Who was unkind first?" asked Morley.

"It was a very different thing, my saying that, and you saying it; although it was very silly of me to say it, because Mamma and Uncle Lindsay love me dearly, and grandmamma and Aunt Rachel, and dear Eve."

"Can't you go on?" again interrogated Ernest, looking still more archly at the fair girl whose hand he took.

"No," said Rose, withdrawing it gently; "I don't think there are many besides who love me; not those whose love I care for."

"Love begets love," said Morley, seriously, "and I am quite sure Rose Lindsay is not the girl to waste her love on any; for, when it is bestowed, it must be returned tenfold."

There was a little pause, during which Miss Lindsay sat down in the chair opposite that in which Morley had been seated before the knock; he continued to stand, in English fashion, with his back to the fire.

"Will you tell me," said he, presently, "why it was a very different thing for you to say, *your life was of no consequence*, to my saying the same?"

"Yes, if you wish to hear what you already know, merely for the pleasure of hearing it repeated." Rose spoke with a slight sarcasm in her tone.

"I cannot understand your meaning in

the least," was Morley's earnest reply, "and shall be very glad of an explanation."

"Then," began Rose, astonished at her own candour, "it is a different thing for one so loved and loving, *so truly loved* as you must be, to make such a speech."

Morley sank upon his knees, much to Miss Lindsay's perturbation, and gazing wistfully in her face, he asked, with eyes literally dancing with pleasure, "*By whom he was so loved?*"

"Why, by the Lady Emily de Vere, I should hope," answered she, almost blaming herself for what *he*, by his countenance, now blamed her visibly.

For a few moments he continued kneeling before her, but all the joyous light had left his eye; then he rose suddenly, with a genuine shiver, and laid his arm upon the narrow mantel-shelf, much to the disorder of the piled shells there. Rose Lindsay's head was bent low upon her bosom; he looked down upon the white parting and glossy braided hair, and saying, "Oh! *how you disappointed me,*" he stooped to imprint a

fervent kiss upon it. She was silent, and she did not raise her head, and he continued: "I thought Rose Lindsay was going to prove herself in this instance, as in every other, superior to the generality of her sex; I thought her above deception of the most harmless kind."

"Deception!" repeated Rose, indignantly, raising her head, and confronting, with a rising colour, the eyes bent on hers.

"Yes, deception, Rose," said Morley, almost sternly. "You know I never loved the Lady Emily de Vere, and you know *who I do love*, and have ever loved. But the lady I love and have ever loved," he continued, changing his tone and assuming the same arch expression he previously wore, "loves and is loved—*so truly loved*—by a certain Captain Riggin."

Rose looked beautiful in her confusion, for through her tears, which glistened in her bright eyes, there shone as merry a gleam of mirth as ever sun broke forth in an April shower; and, indulging an impulse of mischief, she rose from her seat and

mimicked the Captain's bow to such perfection, that Morley laughed till he feared he should rouse the bulky tenant of the bar from his drunken stupor ; and then he clasped the bewitching girl to his heart, and besought her then and there to grant him the undisputed right to guard her for evermore. And she promised to be his "own Rose ;" and he called her his own brave true one ; his "beautiful flower." And they were happy ; yes, although their feet rested upon the cave of piracy, and they were under the roof of wrong and robbery, they tasted that bliss which two hearts in their first confidence can alone realize. O Love ! thou golden beam ! let men of the world scoff at thee ! Let the sordid man of gold despise thee as a fictitious thing ! Without thee what would this world be ? Verily, a globe without a sun !

And now one portion of our work is accomplished ; the polluted air is cleansed ; the destroying insect which has "fed in the bud," drawn the sap, and withered the blossom, once so fair and promising, is arrested

in its loathsome course, and the "blighted flower" is transplanted safely and tenderly to another soil.

Yes; on the evening of the day whose sun was then rising in the heavens, Lady Vernon lay upon a couch in the pretty little drawing-room of Rose Lindsay's home. Poor soul! she looked fatigued with the long journey, but her eyes wandered in strange bewilderment and child-like curiosity on every object around—objects so new to her vision. She no longer wore the dress of tattered silk and the coarse pinafore, but was arrayed in some pretty garments belonging to her benefactress, on which she gazed with unwonted delight. And Morley, he knelt, with his Rose, at Mrs. Lindsay's feet, and received the mother's heart-full blessing. Happy pair! happy evening! Thrice happy to the bosoms of those loved and loving ones, for the good deed they had wrought. But, alas! shall the young hearts go free of those who have thus precariously effected the deliverance of that poor crushed flower? Shall they themselves

prove untainted by the pestilential breath ? O Life's lessons ! Life's discipline ! hard, yet salutary. May faith and patience overcome all transitory woe. "He whom God loveth He chasteneth." And those who cling unto the "Rock of Ages" shall never be overwhelmed by affliction. It is written, "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator."

But Rose is playing a plaintive air and Morley's rich notes accompany her, and the gleam of light in the wild large eye of the lunatic is at once beautiful and painful to behold.

But we must hie to the studio in Newman Street, where the artist has had his first dinner-party. The wine and dessert were now upon the table. There were but three guests, but such a trio as is seldom got together. At the foot, facing the host, was one whose brush was, and is, "a sceptre." *Colour* shone in his eye and in his speech ; his talent beamed from him. To the right sat the greatest orator of his

day; tall and thinly made, with a forehead that told volumes, and an eye that rivalled his lips in eloquence. And on the left was seated a youth, by some two years Ralph's junior, whose countenance was literally one of *fire*! We know of no other term by which we can convey the passionate earnestness, or soul-eagerness of his ever-working features. He was not so strictly handsome as our artist; his face had not the classic form or model proportions, but his vivid animation rendered him far more attractive in his usual bearing, although he could hardly have competed with the other, when that other was aroused by some great and good influence from his wonted air of apathy or cold indifference. He was speaking as we arrive among them; the subject had been the criticism of the great painting of the time, as performed by the "wielder of the brush." "I tell you, I could not endure it! I would be one of 'the few.' Is it not enough to damp, and for ever, the courage of the most courageous and talented?"

"Not the most talented," remarked the

orator quietly. "You are young; you will live to learn that criticism is a stimulus to talent."

"I cannot believe it!" was the passionate reply; "that the beer-drinking critic, with his red nose, or the brandy-drinking one, with his white lank one, could ever inspire me! What can they know about *colour* or form? And, further still, what could they know about the lights and shades of the inspired soul? for mine would be the colours of the soul, wrought, perhaps, by the 'pen' far beyond any that could be depicted on the canvass."

The eyebrows of the "Brush" met, and a cynical smile played round the mouth of the orator. The youth, by no means daunted or cast down by these marks of disapprobation (which, in fact, he hardly saw, so vehement was he in his theme), tossed off a glass of wine (several of which he had previously tossed off lately, rather too closely on one another), exclaiming,—

"Yes! I'd be one of the few—*the few!*"

"The few!" echoed the orator, in some

what of a mocking tone, "whom genius sends as lights into the world?"

"Yes, exactly; that's fine—very fine. But to think that the bright conception of day dreams and nightly vigils should be pulled to pieces!—yes, sir, pulled to pieces by these paltry aspersion-mongers, is—*is* infamous; they should be put down by Act of Parliament!"

There was a general smile at the expense of the youth, whose pen has now realized a part of his ambition, and whose future will, without doubt, send forth outpourings of the soul worthy to be classed among "the few."

"Allow me to observe," remarked the orator, "that I imagine (before many years have passed over your head) you will discover yourself to be mistaken. Criticism, I again repeat, is good for us. Besides, the swarm—that class of men must get their bread as well as ours. If we make, and they pull to pieces, we are each entitled to our proper share. And again, if we (our swarm) were not sometimes pulled to pieces, why, we should get as puffed up and as intolerable

as—as—let me see (a very extensive swarm), Brighton footmen !”

The general smile was now exchanged for a hearty laugh at the drift of the orator ; but faintly echoed, however, by the young aspirant to fame.

Ralph’s two important guests now took their leave. He had been indebted for their company to a grand assembly given that night at the Countess B——’s. They had promised to visit him on their way thither, and Mrs. Bounce had accordingly been charged with the achievement of a very elegant repast. Poor Mrs. Bounce had almost put aside her bouncing, for that evening at least, having had to prepare a supper served in the real French style for the gay dancing Madame upon the ground-floor, who entertained a large concourse of people, of divers countries and divers classes—a superb medley. The loud accompaniment of harp and piano to the nimble feet of those volatile guests resounded (much to the artist’s annoyance) its every strain, with full vigour, into his studio, and ascended even to the top

storey, disturbing the patient slavery of the pale student there.

Now, our host did not feel well; he had been much excited by the visit of the two "lions" who had just taken their departure, and the more so by the compliment "the brush" had thought fit to bestow upon that fancy study of "Eve, the Angel." He had said that Farrers himself might put his name to it. This had thrown Ralph into a kind of mental rhapsody; and now, left alone with the excited youth who had boasted such great things, he unconsciously gave himself up to reverie, although his companion still loudly proclaimed his "aversion to criticism," and his strong ideas of "future celebrity."

This boy had taken a great fancy to our artist; he had found in him a kindred spirit; he resided in the same street, with an elder brother; they were orphans, of goodly blood, but in means impoverished. Ralph had at first got on famously with the spirit of boundless ambition in his new friend; but, as it will sometimes happen, the very struggles of that spirit sufficed, in an undefined manner,

to allay the contest of his own. Not that he in any way drew back from his great purpose—to *gain a name* ; far from it. But he determined for the future to keep the matter more sacred to his own breast, not admiring the effect made on himself and evidently upon others by this display of ardour in his friend ; while that friend, young and unsophisticated, and of a nature whose eagerness baffles description, little heeded the result of the publicity of his feelings and opinions. In the present instance, however, he could not long fail to observe the abstraction of his host, who pleaded a severe headache, which was in part a truthful excuse for his silence. But Ralph, who felt his mind strangely pre-occupied, was getting wearied with the extravagant notions of his enthusiastic guest. He rang for coffee, which beverage seemed to sober the unlimited imagination of the still talkative youth. He began to pace the room with his cup and saucer, and, much to the amusement of his auditor, expatiated largely upon the plot of a work he was about to commence.

For the first time during their acquaintance, Ralph perceived that no common vein of comedy was flowing, "rich and full," under the tragical guise his friend adopted; he was much surprised and diverted at the discovery, and while the boy, with a flushed cheek, was relating spontaneously the "Reminiscences of a 'Brick Wall,'" with a gusto for the ridiculous, for which he had been given but little credit, our artist was pondering with much wonder upon the contradictions of Nature, or rather upon the deceitful appearances of some of her sons and daughters; for a very few evenings before he had met an eminent poetess—one whose touching beauty of sentiment has been the admiration of her age; he had expected to find in her a "lovelorn-looking damsel, with wild eye, and hair streaming in confusion," &c.; instead of which he had been introduced, and actually danced with a lady, whose bulk of form, and variety of colours in her attire, formed no pleasing contrast in his mind to his ideal of "poetic inspiration;" she had danced

more vigorously, enjoyed a more hearty supper, and laughed louder (much to his abhorrence and perplexity) than any other lady present.*

The youth had finished his relation, and had again resorted to his previous subject, "The possession of a Name," on which topic his companion grew warmer, when Dorothy entered hastily, saying, "Hinton, the model, had sent the child with his father for Mr. Thornton to see."

Ralph explained that the child's head had been recommended to him for one in the group of children on the "Mount," and then told Dorothy to ask the man and child to step up stairs.

They were waiting in the hall, and when Dorothy descended, (who, to use her own expression was "scared out of her life, with so much running about,") the little boy was invisible. A group of *jeunes dames* had just arrived to grace the *soirée* of Madame, and their many flowing skirts excluded the view of all minor objects. The little boy, nest-

* A fact.

ling close to his father's side, was all unconscious of the admiration of one of these *belles*, who pronounced him emphatically, "*un beau enfant.*" Enveloped in a cloud of muslin, he inwardly likened these round airy petticoats to fairy hen-coops, and stared in amazement, as his father, in obedience to Dorothy's abrupt summons (a jerk of her thumb over her shoulder) dragged him through the cloud to mount the stairs to the studio. He was in truth a lovely child—such a child as one sees occasionally among the race of the "very poor." It was a face such as one dreams of once—perhaps twice in a lifetime; and over which one naturally imagines "a glory."

The model, who had sent him, lived, as the reader may recollect, in the next wretched abode to the Widow Hopeful. The father of this boy was a poor shoemaker, or perhaps, more correctly speaking, a cobbler. The first appearance of the child drew forth a burst of admiration from the artist, almost equalled by that of his companion. After settling with the father relative to the

“pay,” and the days to bring him, &c., Ralph offered the child some grapes, which lay on a side-table; the father said, “Now, Charley, tell the gentleman a bit of poetry for that.”

“Poetry!” echoed Ralph, in a tone of surprise. “Do you know poetry, little fellow?”

“We calls him *the poet*, sir,” said the man, proudly.

“Truly,” thought both our friends, “talent is not confined to grade.”

“Come, little boy, say it, and I’ll give you a silver sixpence,” said the author.

“I don’t want the sixpence for saying poetry,” answered the child, his face all in a glow; “I *love* to say it.”

“Well, you shall have the sixpence for nothing, then,” and the youth placed it in his little palm.

“I only remember one little bit, now; because I’m sleepy,” said the child. “It’s what mother taught me, so I always remember that.”

"Say on, little man," said Ralph, kindly;
and the child in deep earnest tones began :—

" TO MY BROTHER.

" We in one mother's arms were locked—long be her
love repaid !

In the same cradle we were rocked, round the same
earth we played.

We are but one.—Be that the bond to hold us till we die—
Shoulder to shoulder let us stand, till side by side we
lie ! " . . .

There was something in the lisping voice
and yearning tenderness of the child's coun-
tenance, which drew a moisture into the
eyes of both the young men, whose hearts,
a few moments before, had been so replete
with " Fame."

The father took his child away ; deeper
depression stole over the spirits of the host,
and the visitor in due time took his leave.
And then our artist *thought* — *thought*
freely ; but our artist was not the same as
we found him some months ago, when he
first inhabited those rooms. He was an
altered man ; he had still the same all-
absorbing desire for distinction and popu-

larity ; but mingled with the feeling of ambition was one of a holier tendency. He had read of *his Maker*. By degrees, “his Maker” had intervened with other aspirations, and overbalanced them. Reflections on “his Maker” had become, *unknown ta him*, “part and parcel of his being.” Still, he *prayed not* ; he could not form a prayer ; he felt that *same void* at heart which we endeavoured before to describe. It was there, in the early morn and in the dim twilight. Great was the *want*, but the *remedy* he was as yet unable to administer. When the youth had gone, whose earth-yearnings had drawn *his* further from the dark, uncertain globe, where “man’s favour” shines at least but a few brief years — where a passing truth may alienate it, or a look forfeit it for ever—he turned in spirit to “this favour,” constant and enduring ; in the possession of which we may be alike independent of what the world gives or withholds : “With it we are rich, whatever else we may want. Without it we are poor, though we have the wealth of worlds beside.”

Dorothy came to enquire if she should take the warm water (which he usually had at night) into his bed-room. It was past eleven, and the girl looked jaded and worn. Ralph did what he had never done before—offered her a glass of wine. *He* felt ill and dispirited, and had, therefore, compassion upon *her*. The wine may have wrought some confidence in the breast of Dorothy, who was usually so concise, for she informed him “that in about a quarter of an hour the grand supper was to be served below;” also, “that in going to the door with the young gentleman who had just quitted the studio, she had perceived a queer-looking countryman about to mount the door-steps, and that, when the door opened, he had stopped short in his ascent, and asked the way to a ‘Mr. Briers.’” She supposed “he had come a long way, for he looked muddy; but when she turned from receiving the shilling the young gentleman was kind enough to give her, he had disappeared,” &c. To all of which Ralph paid but little attention, feeling a hearty desire to be left “to muse

alone." The girl appeared to have remarked his indifference, for she stopped short in her account of "the horror she had of those great thick countrymen," merely adding, "that he seemed to have *an uncommon head of hair*," which speech rang in a most singular manner in the ears of the artist long after she had gone and he had retired to his chamber.

He still felt in a kind of dreamy state, of which he did not endeavour to divest himself, the effect of it being more soothing than otherwise to his nerves, which he began to imagine "were rather unstrung."

Dorothy, as she placed upon a tray some dozen custards, observed that "Mr. Thornton looked right down ill, and more miserable than ever," and, in her opinion, "company didn't agree with him."

Mrs. Bounce, who was beset by baking and *blanc mange*, begged her to hold her peace about such trifles when so weighty a matter was in hand.

There was a gas-light burning near the artist's bed, so that he could lie and read at

pleasure; he determined to keep it burning to-night till the gas was turned off by those below, so that he might indulge in his musing condition.

He had a little book Morley had given him, called "Morning and Night Watches;" he had hardly looked at it till now, but he threw it on the bed with his Bible before laying himself down. The first part he read he certainly fully agreed with, "that his marvel is that, as a wandering star, he has not been left to drift onwards to the blackness of darkness for ever." He reads on, and finding he is at the "Morning Watches," he turns to the "Nightly" ones, and reads, "'Seek ye the Lord while He may be found.' 'While!' There is a solemn warning in that one word! It tells thee there is a day coming when the Lord will be sought, but will not be found. Reader! cast thyself this night at his footstool, implore his mercy. Rise not from thy bended knees until, with his propitiating smile gladdening thee, and the hope of his heaven cheering thee, thou mayest (it may be for the first time in thy

life) lie down with a quiet conscience and a pardoned soul." And with quick impulse he arises from his bed, and kneeling down, prays earnestly that he may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. *And God heard him, and blessed him*, for He has said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

What was it that had wrought this great change in the student's soul?—The change had been growing imperceptibly from the time when the divine light had first found entrance into that darkened abode—when, to use his own words, the "*key had first unlocked the treasury*." But what had caused that Light thus to kindle, and, bursting forth in its full radiancy, to reveal the glorious pathway to the eternal home?—Is there a spell in the lisping voice of childhood?—"Out of the mouth of babes may we hear wisdom." Had that young child's tenderness and affection touched a chord vibrating through his

heart, and leaving its own pure essence there? Had it stirred the deep mine of feelings, and awakened a sense of joy such as its seraph nature can alone bestow?—Sure it is, that he deplored his own uncared-for infancy more bitterly than before; he envied the child in the possession of a brother, and far more in the untold blessing of a “good and doating mother.” And he perhaps indulged in an old opinion too fully when he concluded that those only could be good men who had such guides in youth. May be the recollection of all Ernest Morley had said with regard to his mother strengthened him in his conviction.

Strangely, there wove in the heart’s mazy windings a web, fine and chaste; gradually it took the semblance of a glowing picture of life—warm, domestic life! Little children stood around him, and one lay upon the breast of the mother. Need we say *whose form the mother bore*? Hers whose tiny note, like a talisman, lay concealed beneath his pillow—its nightly resting-place. She had no wings in that picture, though in one

of his *innermost soul* they glistened silvery bright. But now he rises from his knees, comforted ; for great is the calm within him. The words have barely escaped his lips, "Lord, have mercy upon me, and lead me unto Thee !" and the *aching void in his soul is filled*. Unfettered from the chains of earthliness that have bound him to the dust so long, he sees all that he has clung to "shadowy and unreal," beholds the true haven of "love and rest," and lies down again with a spirit which feels at peace with God. He takes his Bible now, and has turned to the last chapter of James. It would seem he had studied that part before, for there are slight pencil marks here and there. He reaches his coat, which lies on the chair at the bedside, and takes from the pocket a pencil, as though he were about to make more.

The clamour from the regions of Madame has subsided ; the sounds of music and mirth have ceased, for the guests are at supper. The meal, served in a back apartment, does ample justice to the united efforts of Mrs.

Bounce, the hired cook, and Dorothy, who is officiating as waitress with much zeal. Ralph, with a sigh of relief at the cessation of the various noises, reclines back in his bed, reading, "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." He hears a slight noise in the studio, and looks mechanically towards the folding doors which face his bed, but thinking it might be Dorothy turning off the gas, which he remembers he left burning there, he takes no further heed, but continues reading. Presently the sound is repeated, and again he glances at the doors, distinctly perceiving the handle move.

"You can't come in," he ejaculates, imagining now that somebody has made a mistake in the rooms, feeling sure that none of his own visitors would enter thus uncereemoniously. But to his consternation the door opens, and admits (as he immediately recognized by the head of hair) the countryman whom Dorothy described as standing by the doorsteps.

"You have made a mistake," exclaims the artist, with all his customary *hauteur*—nothing doubting that the man is intoxicated or beside himself.

"I've made no mistake," is the cool reply, spoken in a determined tone by the advancing figure, who, having closed the door and locked it, has placed the key in his pocket, and stands a short distance from the bed, confronting its inmate. Ralph is so taken by surprise by this proceeding, that at first he loses all power of utterance, and can only stare at the new comer in unfeigned amazement; but suddenly the conviction flashes across his mind (which perhaps has already taken possession of that of the reader) that, in spite of the immense head of hair, the bushy eyebrows, whiskers, &c., and countryman's attire, the eyes which glared upon him were those of *Blight*.

"Blight!" he repeats aloud, as the truth rushes upon him; and then thrusting his left hand (still clasping his Bible) under the bed-clothes, he half rises, demanding, in no

conciliatory tone of voice, the reason of this extraordinary visit and conduct.

"You were polite enough to ask much the same question the last time I honoured you, and you received a polite reply," is the answer, in as cool a tone and manner as before. "It is my turn to question now."

Ralph, by no means cowardly by nature, is nevertheless naturally alarmed by the defying bearing of the lawyer, together with the late visit and the disguise. He moves as though he were about to leave his bed, and makes towards the bell, which is at the side of the fire-place to the right, but the wary Blight detects the manœuvre, and plants himself midway between it and the youth, who, with a flushed cheek but undaunted manner, commands him "instantly to be off, or, stripped as he is, he will enforce his riddance."

"Not so fast, young gentleman," replies the man of law, in a tone of mingled wile and authority. "I tell you I've a few questions to ask, which perhaps, before I

take my leave, you'll be good enough to answer."

Ralph replies, "He will answer them, if Mr. Blight will call at a more fitting time;" thinking, by taking the matter thus quietly, he may get rid at once of the man whom he had always held in utter abhorrence, and whose present extraordinary attire and strange conduct inspired him with serious misgivings.

"I'll not detain your attention long," remarks Blight, with a touch of his old blandness. "Firstly, may I ask your reasons for interfering with my concerns—your motive for busying yourself in affairs which have nothing to do with you?"

Ralph, totally at a loss to understand the meaning of these interrogations, replies, with all his former haughtiness, "May I ask *your* motive for putting such extraordinary questions to me, when you must be fully aware that I despise both you and your affairs too heartily to stoop to heed them?"

"Oh, that's the turn, is it?" cries the other, menacingly. "So, that's your dodge!"

but it won't do. What were you doing on Doverton beach one night last autumn? What business had you to transact at the "Gull"—eh? Did you think *to win the child through favour of the mother?* "

A strange wild thrill shoots through the artist's frame. In an instant arises before him a faint dawning of the truth; a dim and indistinct notion of what might have, and really had, in part occurred. Memory recalled forcibly to his mind his own feelings and impressions on that evening at Sea View after the storm, and his return from his long walk with Morley to Black Rock; how he had discerned a strong similitude between the features of Eve, "the angel," and those of the poor lorn "lady of the beach;" and how all undefinable had been the chain he had so unconsciously linked between them. That some discovery had been made relative to the lunatic, he does not for a moment doubt, and that Blight had played some villanous part, is also equally apparent to his mind; and he answers sternly, "You are wholly mistaken. If wrong has come to light, and

the cap fits your head, you must wear it ; but don't accuse those of placing it there whose hands are unsoiled by anything belonging to you."

The glare in the lawyer's eyes increases to ferocity, as he replies, "What, you are going to show the white feather, are you?"

"No ! by ——" exclaims the artist, again about to rise.

But the man of law approaching, says calmly, dropping his voice to its usual plausible tone, "Do not trouble to disturb yourself, I have nearly done, and this shall be my last visit, as my presence is so disagreeable to you."

"It is loathsome !" puts in Ralph ; who, however, deems it wisest, on the whole, to let Blight finish what he has to say, allowing him time to leave his chamber before he gives the alarm, which he fully determines to do before the other can quit the house, feeling convinced that he has either committed, or been accessory to, the perpetration of some deed which demands punishment ; which he mentally resolves shall not be his

fault if not inflicted.—Alas ! for the resolution of man.—

“I am perfectly cognizant of that fact,” continues the lawyer, in the same tone. “You were pleased to upbraid me in our last interview with want of sincerity in not showing my hatred with the same choice candour in which your own is displayed. I am surprised you should withhold this candour on other subjects, as it is such a cherished trait in your character. I am surprised you should deny ——”

“I have denied falsity,” exclaims Ralph, with an impatient gesture of his hand (the right one, the left still clasps the Book of God).

“Do you think I dogged your footsteps for nothing? Will you deny your moonlight visit to the ‘Gull,’ and to the hovel on the beach, eh? Will you deny the painted likeness? Will you?”

“Enough of this, Mr. Blight; I have borne with you long enough; I return your question,—‘What business have you to interfere with *my affairs*?’ Above all, to dog

my steps, as I now well remember that you did, for the shadow on the sands must have been what I thought—your own.”

“So you think to have it all your own way?” now storms Blight; “you think to cross my path to the end, do you? You think you’re in a fair way to fame and grandeur; and you top up by thinking to get that dainty ‘bit’ at Sea View all to yourself, eh?”

“*You, at least, shall never get her,*” replies Ralph, firmly, and with forced calmness, for his eyes flash fire at this allusion to Eve. He does not see till now what is flashing in the grasp of Blight.—He must have drawn it from his pocket during that last speech; *it is the polished steel of a long knife*, and, ere the cry can escape, which rushes in horror to the artist’s lips, it is buried (with the words, “AND YOU SHALL NEVER HAVE HER!”) in his heart, up to the hilt! . . . The murderer lingers a few moments to place the senseless fingers of the right hand over the instrument of death, while the “ransomed soul,” its trying ordeal finished

—the perilous voyage at an end—is joyfully welcomed amid the angelic choir! The spirit but just made free from the trammels of earth, fleeth pure and fresh to the open and widely-spreading bosom of its Creator, to shine among “His jewels” for evermore! To know *no void*—no bitterness again!

Stealthily the murderer steals from the room; cat-like, he creeps down the stairs and out of the house; noiselessly he closes the door, and faintly the frozen pavement echoes the fleet, frantic footfall of the blood-stained barterer—Blight!

CHAPTER V.

“ When night receding, gave place unto day,
Through half-closed shutters, stole the sun’s first ray,
Quivering whereon, the corpse all ghastly lay.

.
But the soul ransomed, and in bliss for aye,
Did look down pitying its poor house of clay,
Whose name, ‘ nipped i’ the bud,’ soon knew decay,
And whose memory, like all things, would now pass
away.”

“ No longer tremblingly awaiting earth’s hard-earned
smile or chilling frown,
He shineth purified, resplendent, ‘mid hallowed ‘Jewels’
in the ‘Eternal Crown.’ ”

THREADING his way nimbly—skimming,
as it were, the hard slippery ground—the
murderer proceeds a full quarter of a mile,
and then hails a return cab, bidding the half-
dozing driver “ whip up his nag,” in a bluff,

burly voice, suitable to his attire. He alights in the neighbourhood of Smithfield, answering to the remark of the cabman, "that it's a very chilly night," "E-e-s, if this here l-a-s-t-s, there'll be another crop gone, that's s-a-r-tai-n."

"Ah! bad for you farmers," sympathizes the weary driver, as he turns his vehicle and retraces his way.

Blight hurries on again with the same quick gliding motion as before, for a good half mile, down foul miserable windings, till he reaches a vicinity of the lowest description, and there he stops before the door of a small, dirty-looking tavern. He is evidently expected; for the half-clad, sleepy girl who admits him, takes no further heed of his advent than by placing a greasy candlestick in his hand; she stays to rebolt the door, and he walks up the stairs divested of his sneaking gait, which but ill agreed with his present rough garments. He turns the handle of a low door without the ceremony of knocking. and discloses a

small apartment meanly furnished with an old tottery four-post bedstead, without drapery of any kind, on which lay a bonnet, like the bedstead, much the worse for wear, a woman's large black cloak of the same description, and a neat little portmanteau, which, unlike the previous articles, appears quite new. There is an old washstand fitting one corner, with a basin and a broken ewer ; a chair against the wall, and another one drawn to a small round table in the centre of the room, on which is seated the Widow Hopeful. Her attitude, as the door opens thus suddenly upon her, is one of anxiety and extreme dejection. The solitary light, with its long flickering wick, reveals the bowed body which "time has early aged," and the pale, careworn face but dimly.

"Well, have you waited long ?" asks Blight, with a bold recklessness of manner which appears to surprise the woman, as, doubtless it would our readers, did we not enlighten them with the fact that he has swallowed a flask of brandy on his way to the tavern.

“Not very. I have got this ready as you told me—shall I pour you some?”

The woman, with a trembling movement, in harmony with her voice, steps across the room and takes a bottle from a shelf.

“Yes, that’ll do; now take a pull yourself. Why, you’re tired, you’re as white as ——;” he stops short, shivering, then hastily resumes, “Now, I haven’t a moment to lose; where are the clothes?”

The widow pulls up the skirt of her dress, while the murderer locks the door. She unties a string around her waist and draws forth a case which is suspended around her; unfastening this, she lays upon the bed a new suit of black cloth, cut in the clerical fashion—the white lappets, &c., and all corresponding to the guise of that order. She then takes from the portmanteau a little box, which she opens, and displays a wig of glossy, but rather lank, black hair, and a pair of blue spectacles. These she puts upon the table, and proceeds to re-fasten the portmanteau in silence. There is a card upon it, on which is written very neatly in a

female hand, "*The Reverend Meekly, Passenger to Brighton.*"

While she is thus engaged, she gazes stealthily at the man who has already thrown off his rough coat, which lies upon the tattered hearthrug, and is removing his nether, rudely-fashioned garments.

Does she know of the awful crime which has been perpetrated that night? No; she knows something has taken place which demands these strange and secret changes of apparel. She knows that on her sworn secrecy and aid hangs a rich, a golden reward! And she knows, in her heart, that violation of such secrecy would cost her life! This latter knowledge is conceived alone; no word has passed to warrant such conviction hitherto; but the eye of Blight had said what his lips had failed, till now, to utter.

"What could it be that had been done?" was the question of her doubting, beating heart. She had pictured him, on his return, shaking like an aspen—for dark forebodings had been hers. She had been reduced to want—to utter starvation—when the coils of

Blight had again closed around her. Again had she fallen, and in bare destitution, to keep an aged mother, herself, and child, from the workhouse, had she resolved to do his bidding, that he would give her the interest of her little all, and threefold what it should realize.

The murderer turns from the cracked, dim mirror so metamorphosed that even she, who had watched the transition, stares in wonder.

"Now, you don't forget the contract?" he asks, adapting his voice and manner to his new name and attire ; but there is a gleam from his eye, perceivable even through the spectacles, which leads the widow to imagine that the draught she has given him is not the first that he has had to-night.

"Why the h—l don't you answer?" he asks, excitedly, as she continues to look bewilderedly upon him.

"Yes, oh, yes ! I quite remember."

"You remember what you *swore* ?"

"I do."

She begins to raise the cast-off disguise

from the ground and place it in the case to hang around her. As she lifts the coat from the rug, she starts! White as death, she lets it fall again. *There is blood upon the sleeve!*

"What now! eh? chicken-hearted!" exclaims the murderer.

"Oh! what have you done?" she gasps.

"Ah! would you fail me?" he cries, one clenched fist suspended over the crouching figure of the horror-stricken woman.

"Stay! strike not, *for our child's sake!* I will swear again; *I will never betray you.*"

"Swear then—first—that you'll burn these clothes before sunrise; secondly—that you know nothing of me, or of where I am. I shall soon be in America. But *split*, and your *life's the consequence!*"

To all this, the woman, kneeling, takes a solemn oath. He flings her a purse of gold—the wages of sin. She clutches her treasure. Alas! she has exchanged the perishable with the imperishable! He is gone. She clasps the gold; it is hers—all hers—*her own!*

She has purchased her soul's unrest, and the hope of her bosom is "blighted" for ever. . . .

And morning dawned, and a golden beam strayed through the shutters of the chamber leading to the studio ; it lighted upon the wan, chiselled features of him whose spirit had but at that time yesterday wrestled with earth's chill, forbidding waters striving to gain the summit of the topmost wave, whose wild tossing baffled with a savage glee his clay-bound longings !—Had not his soul now realized more, *far more*, than the height of his ambition ? Had not his spirit's yearnings for the peace he could not seek, till his last hour was proclaimed, been satisfied to the full ? Yea, the parched soul, with its "groanings unutterable," had been watered freely with the balmy, healing dews of Heaven !

Morley had slept that night at the little villa, in the pretty bedroom of his betrothed, she having shared her mother's couch ; the only spare room being given up to Lady Vernon and her attendant. The day preceding had been one of much excitement and

fatigue, and, consequently, it was late in the morning before the young people made their appearance. Indeed, Morley had not left his room when the sound of a vehicle, rushing along at a frantic pace, and stopping suddenly before the villa, arrested his attention. He took no further heed of it for the moment, thinking it must have arrived at the next house, and began wondering, as he finished his toilet, if any poor creature were very ill, and that was the doctor just summoned, &c.; he heard no knock, and presently presumed it had gone on farther, when there was a gentle tap at his own chamber-door ; being dressed, all but his coat, he opened it. It was Rose, who, with a blanched cheek and quivering lip, endeavoured to speak, but failed, and burst into tears.

“ Good God ! darling,” exclaimed Morley, supporting her tenderly, “ what is the matter ? ”

But all Rose could say was, “ *Ralph !* ”

“ Ralph ! well, what of him ? Is he very ill ? Don’t distress yourself, darling. Was that cab sent here ? Tell me, is he ill—

dying? Don't cry so, whatever it may be."

"I don't know hardly what it is. . The man seems so frightened he can't stand. Mamma has taken him into the parlour."

Mrs. Lindsay here hurried up the stairs; she whispered in Morley's ear. Rose heard the word "Suicide," and uttered a shriek so full of terror and anguish, that, for the few moments succeeding, her lover's and mother's attention were riveted on herself; she seemed lost to reason with the sudden shock, which taking place so immediately upon her late trying and perilous adventure, proved too much for her nerves to sustain; she swooned in her lover's arms, who, in terrible alarm at her deathlike appearance, would not leave the bedside on which he had laid her till her senses were restored. He then left her in her mother's charge, and descended the stairs; himself trembling in every limb, and all his senses in a complete whirl of doubt and apprehension. Poor Mr. Bounce (for it was he) was sitting literally upon thorns, although his visible seat was a well-stuffed

chair ; he had been sent off at a mad rate by his “better” and “bigger half” for Mr. Morley ; he had not found that gentleman at his hotel where the good lady had directed the cabman to “put him down and wait for him,” as though she had referred to a bale of goods. He had then (wonderful to relate) himself ordered the man to drive to Mrs. Lindsay’s ; and the driver had needed no pressing to “mend his pace,” or rather his horse’s, for the awful news had soon spread, and, surely, into the dullest flowing veins, the knowledge of such crime must impart energy. He then, verily, sat on thorns, for he dreaded this delay, not only in sympathy for his own future sufferings on that account, but that he, in truth, longed for the presence of somebody belonging to the poor youth whose untimely end had frozen all his blood, which had never kindled too warmly. Poor man ! he looked a pitiable object, and could only gasp out sentences at intervals. From what Morley could gather by his few hurried questions, it appeared that Dorothy had knocked at the artist’s door, as usual, at

about a quarter to seven ; she had knocked again at the turn of the hour, having heard no reply to her first summons, which she had repeated at the time more than once. Still hearing no answer, she had gone into her aunt's bedroom, and mentioned the circumstance, it being a very unusual one, as "Mr. Thornton," she said, always said "Yes," directly. Mrs. Bounce, feeling very sleepy herself, while dressing, merely gaped, and said, "Oh ! the poor boy's sleepy ; let him have it out." But Dorothy did not seem as if she could leave the matter alone ; and, at length, having thumped with all her might at the student's door, still detecting no sound of any one moving within the chamber, she had called her pale, little uncle to stand by, while she made bold to open it and enter. The remainder of the description given by the poor terrified little Bounce need not be told. Dorothy had uttered a shrill scream, which had brought various members of the household to witness the fearful and heart-rending spectacle.

It was nearly eleven o'clock before Morley

arrived in Newman Street. The crowd was so great before the house where the horrible tragedy had been enacted, and also for some distance from it, that he was forced to alight and push his way through it, aided by a policeman. Cries of "Here comes the young man's brother!" and "Here comes another doctor!" &c., &c., met his ears on all sides. He gladly reached the door, followed by the almost fainting Bounce, and was instantly admitted by Dorothy, who, had she been a corpse herself, could not have looked more colourless. The French madame and several other people were assembled in the hall, all in active discourse on the dreadful event that had taken place, and the strange secluded habits and reserved manners of the suicide, all unanimously agreeing "that they were not the least surprised at what had occurred, from what they had heard, seen, &c." With a stern air Morley passed silently by; half way up the stairs, he was met by Mrs. Bounce and a tall thin gentleman, with a very high-bridged nose, and much pomposity, whom Mrs. Bounce introduced as "Dr.

Knowall." Morley bowed, and the learned man saying "he had stayed till his arrival in concurrence with Mrs. Bounce's desire," turned on his heel, and led the way to the chamber of death. The body of the youth had been left just in the same state as when first discovered. Mrs. Bounce (who was much affected) said she had considered it best to let it rest so, till Mr. Morley had been. It was a sad, sad sight, even for a stranger's eye, and when poor Morley, quite overcome, sank into a chair, and tried in vain to subdue the violent sobs which shook his manly frame, the pompous doctor, quite forgetting his framed speech of arteries, pulses, &c., broke forth into weeping too. After a distressing pause, in which the four inmates of that room, Morley, the doctor, Mrs. Bounce, and Dorothy, formed as sorrow-stricken a group as imagination can conceive, the man of physic gave it as his opinion, in a tremulous voice, "that from what he had learnt that morning of the habits of the poor youth, he should say insanity had been creeping upon him for some time past."

Morley shook his head. "There was nothing like insanity about him when I saw him last—which was, I believe, the beginning of last week"—he looked towards Dorothy, who said "Yes, sir—aunt, you were out when Mr. Morley was here—but, sir, since then he has looked more melancholy, I think; and yet sometimes I couldn't understand it; he spoke more cheerfully, and looked kinder than he did when he first came."

"Ah!" said Morley, his eyes refilling, "you think so now, perhaps, because he is gone—we never prize each other sufficiently in life."

The physician gently argued that it would be better for Mr. Morley to retire from the terrible scene. It was plain that life had been extinct for many hours, and in his opinion the deed had been committed by the wretched youth the previous night on retiring to rest. There remained nothing to be done but the sitting of the coroner's inquest, which he supposed would ensue, although for his part, in such cases, he con-

sidered such proceeding quite superfluous, as the fact was perfectly plain to everybody, &c.

Morley quietly observed that he wished to be left alone with the body of his poor friend for a short time. The doctor took his leave, again kindly admonishing him against trying his feelings too much, as no good could be done. And Mrs. Bounce, followed by Dorothy, quitted the apartment.

Long did Morley gaze on the features of the inanimate form—any one, to have watched him narrowly, would have traced a doubtful and anxious expression kindling in his tear-dimmed eye. He took hold of the cold fingers which had been placed over the knife ; he looked intently again into the face,—“that is not the expression one would look for in the corpse of a suicide,” he murmured. He stood for some time like one transfixed. “There is some mystery, I feel convinced,” he muttered, and some strange feeling must have stirred his heart, for he shuddered and closed his eyes.

Presently, a new impulse seized him, and

walking round to the other side of the bed, he drew down the coverings, and, with a thrill of joy, disclosed in the grasp of the senseless hand—the Book of Life. A large hot tear fell on the yielding fingers as, removing it, he gazed upon the open page. It was, as we related, the last chapter of James. A faint pencil-mark, embracing the two last verses, drew his attention to them: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” And, traced also in pencil, so lightly that it was only just discernible to the straining eye which read, were the words, “*Dear Morley.*” And the young man bowed his head, and fell upon his knees, pouring out his heart in thankfulness to the Father of Mercy! to the God of love, and to the Saviour of the lost sheep. Humbly did he praise his Maker for the good task which had been allotted him—for the grace and power with which he, as the simple, frail instrument,

had been enabled to "unlock the treasury," the holy sanctuary of the Eternal God!

Truly, his reward was great. The bright sunbeam which has hovered so fitfully—fearing till now to rest in the abode of blood and crime—streams through the shutter's aperture, in a flood of golden light, and illumines the kneeling form in glory! Invisible spirits flit their radiant wings around him, redolent with love and peace—sent as heralds from on High—for there is ecstasy in Heaven! The stray sheep is found, "and there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth!" . . .

"You cannot remember anybody else coming up here at all last night?" is Morley's question to Dorothy, as he sits in the studio, in the arm-chair the artist so often reclined in, to meditate on "future fame."

"No, sir—nobody."

"Have you told Mr. Morley about that model man and the child?" asked Mrs. Bounce.

"Yes, aunt; there's one I've quite forgotten till now, and that's that strange-

looking countryman I saw on our door-step—at least, just about to come up it.”

“A countryman!” exclaimed Morley.
“What was he like?”

Dorothy described him as a thick-set, stout man, with a large rough coat, and a great deal of hair.

“But how came you to see his hair? Hadn’t he a hat on? What was his face like?” were questions poured hurriedly forth by Morley.

“I’ll tell you how it was, sir. Just as I opened the door—which I did very quickly, as I do all things, sir—to let out poor Mr. Thornton’s last visitor (I shouldn’t have done that, only I happened to be in the hall with a tray of glasses, when he came down the stairs), the man had one of his great feet on our bottom door-step, before I could say ‘What’s your business here?’ He had taken off his hat, which I think was a felt one, but I can’t be sure; and he wiped his face with a large red pocket-handkerchief, as if he was a good deal heated and had walked a long distance. He asked, in a

gruff voice, 'If this here was Mr. Brier's.' I said, quickly, 'No; I don't know such a name here.' And before I turned from receiving the shilling the gentleman was kind enough to give me, he had gone on, so I really didn't see his face; but I didn't like his voice a bit."

"Could he by any possibility have got into the house after that, and gone up stairs without your or anybody else's knowledge?" asked Ernest Morley, the expression we noticed in his face before deepening into one of intense anxiety and apprehension.

"Oh, no, sir! I think that would have been impossible, for I was flying about like wildfire for our gay Madame."

"Yes; but the door was left unfastened, Dorothy, till a late hour, on account of her guests," remarked Mrs. Bounce, whose fat, wondering face was turned towards Morley's, full of curiosity to know why he should suspect this strange countryman.

Ernest, however, did not speak; he looked, as he indeed was, lost in thought—entangled in a web of heart-corroding doubt and ner-

vous fear. It was natural to conclude that Blight should have effected his escape from this country immediately on finding that his treachery had been discovered (not to America,—Morley did not suppose that, as he had named that place to him at the door of the “Gull”). Rose and he had agreed with Mrs. Lindsay that it would be wisest to maintain strict secrecy regarding the whole of that affair, leaving time to reveal Blight in his true colours of deadly hue to the Doctor; but the recent awful event had altered the case in the mind of Morley. He judged for a moment that it would be better to divulge all that had passed; and yet, again, what good could it do? There was no proof—not the slightest evidence beyond his own imagination. And on cooler reflection he began to think his suspicions groundless, if not foolish. What could have been Blight’s motives for taking the poor boy’s life? He knew they held each other in absolute detestation; but at such a time, when the punishable conduct of the former was but just made open to daylight and justice,

surely his mind would be otherwise occupied than in wreaking feelings of murderous enmity upon so innocent a victim. Not so, however, thought Rose, when on his return to the Villa he communicated to her all that he had seen and heard, together with the suspicion which had so vividly seized his first ideas upon the conflicting subject. With a woman's tact she could see a great way into "the passages of the past."

"It was certain," as she said, "that 'the portrait' had been discovered, and that circumstance, in her judgment, was almost sufficient cause for the awful act which had been committed; having well known and noted in many instances the bitter animosity of the sycophant lawyer towards the poor artist."

But Morley began to fear that they were a little too severe in their hasty condemnation; nevertheless he fully coincided with the view Miss Lindsay took of the sad affair.

But what was to be done? Mrs. Lindsay was consulted, who was as averse as Rose was to having the escape of the lunatic, with

all that transpired relating to it, made known at Sea View. She echoed her daughter's speech, who with tears declared, if the secret were divulged it would be the death of good Aunt Rachel. "Only suppose she is his wife!" she continued, almost inaudibly.

Morley remained for some minutes in a musing attitude; he took the hand of his loved one in his own, and presently said, "I do not see just now what good could be derived from revealing our secret to the Doctor, further than perhaps by it abetting the discovery of Blight; and then, if he does not choose to punish him for the base deception he has practised—which perhaps he might not, on account of avoiding publicity—I hardly see how we could bring such a charge as this against him on such slight grounds of suspicion. But I *do* see that it would be quite right to acquaint the Doctor with our suspicions, and the question is, how to do so without betraying a part of what has occurred."

After mature consideration, it was at length determined that Morley should

acquaint the Doctor with his knowledge of the deliverance of the Lady Vernon from the infamous designs of Blight, avoiding all appearance of cognition as to any of the particulars relating to it, and also as to *where* and *with whom* she then tarried. He was to mention it as a fact, for the declaration of which he had good authority; and also the statement that "she was with friends, and would trouble him no more." He was then to protest his conviction that he had seen Blight, the night the outrage was to have been committed, strangely disguised on horseback; but he was not to divulge *where*, as that would immediately arouse a suspicion in the Doctor's mind as to Morley himself having aided in the rescue; and, above all things, he was to make it appear that the secret of the escape had been confided to him, as merely to a safe and disinterested person, who would carry the above message correctly to Dr. Thornton. And the three who planned this arrangement in such grief and anxiety, little doubted but that the Doctor would share their suspicion in some

degree when he was made aware of the perfidy of Blight.

It was a wretched evening—how different to the last in that cosy little drawing-room! Poor Rose, who could in no way command her feelings, went early to bed. Morley continued to pace the room, while carrying on a sad and broken discourse with Mrs. Lindsay. He was to be called early, and start off by the first train in the morning for Doverton. But again did man's proposal fail him. Poor Morley awoke from a frightful dream with such a dreadful headache that he could scarcely turn his head upon the pillow. He, in his turn, had to be nursed and tended; but in spite of Mrs. Lindsay's fears, and Rose's entreaties for the postponement of his journey till the following day, he, as his head became more bearable, had made up his mind to leave London that afternoon, in order to try to fulfil his mission, with the determination (of which he did not acquaint his betrothed) to pay a visit to the "Gull" on his first arrival. He would not get to Doverton until late in

the evening, and he knew she would have no rest from anxiety were she aware of his intention. For himself he had no fear, for his trust was in God; and he might, he thought (if by no other means, by the offer of a fresh sum of money—the woman Dacey had been amply rewarded for her former zeal) gain some tidings of the whereabouts of Blight. Accordingly he arrived at the terminus, and took his ticket for M——.

We must now turn once more to the hopeless widow, who has performed her fearful task, and burnt to ashes the bloodstained clothes of the murderer. We would wish our readers to frame her in mind, as we recall with our pen the days of her youth, when, blooming and innocent, she gathered wild-flowers in the woods of Shooter's Hill, a bright light beaming in her eye, a merry laugh and a bounding step, symbols of a heart which, if it knew the touch of sorrow, was in itself so pure and joyous that the trace was obliterated as fleetly as the footprint on the wave-washed sand. We would

wish them to picture her now—to view the fearful contrast—the change wrought in one subject to like frailties and passions as themselves. Look at her, as she sits crushed and jaded! She has counted her gold—her treasure for which she has bartered peace with herself and God! Has she been drinking? Yes, long draughts of that flaming liquor; and she sinks back upon the bed in a state of stupor, which lasts through some hours of the day.

We have brought her into notice now, partly to state that a letter given to her by the murderer, directed to Doverton, which she should have posted on the previous night, lies in her pocket, forgotten. When she recovers from her stupor the day is far advanced; she thinks of the letter for the first time. It was, he had said, “to reach the man to whom it was addressed that morning, and she was on no account to omit posting it, as it was relative to some rascally tenant of his in Gin Way.” Not knowing any other course to pursue, she thinks of a telegraphic message, and her

dull eye lights with something approaching to pleasure, as she imagines she may by that means drive suspicion further from him, should any yet be entertained against him for the deed of which she feels too surely he has been guilty. How must she have fallen, step by step, from her native purity, thus to indulge the wish of concealing the murderer! Yes, she had fallen. Fallen *once*, then had the hand of God interceded between her and sin. He had given her a loving husband, who had led her to the right path—the “path of righteousness;” but, alas! again did she become a victim to “the wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.”

The telegraph message is sent, in the name of Mr. Bruce the lawyer, as the note was signed by that appellation. It was an order to this effect: “To turn old Mrs. Harding [the mother of the sailor who had spared Rose Lindsay in the struggle on the beach, whom she had some time previously clothed and fed at Sea View] out of doors

that night if her rent was not forthcoming, and to seize on all her goods," which, poor soul, were few and of a very wretched description!

This was Blight's revenge on Dick Harding for his failure in the late diabolical scheme. And the woman, "lost to hope," experienced a faint feeling of satisfaction when she had done this, thinking it might put pursuers on the wrong scent. And then she retraced her way. What to do? We will not follow her; her history is too sad and true a one.—For of her it may be said: "The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

CHAPTER VI.

"I call to mind the days when I was young."

"Prithee, have mercy on her, she is old and poor ! . . .
My conscience pricks me."

THE afternoon was warm and genial ; like those days of hypocrisy in early spring, it tempted one into the belief that it led summer by the hand. There had been a sharp frost the night before, which had nipped, ruthlessly, the old General's strawberry-bed. He stood by it now, looking quite disconsolate (for him) at these ravages of "Cold Jack," but with a smile of satisfaction and something like a little sly wink (all to himself) at the remembrance of the many plants of his favourite fruit which were effectually protected from any such misfortune, a fine specimen of which he had partaken with his

stately neighbour, the Baronet, the day before. He crossed his arms behind him, and sauntered on. He drew near a side gate, and stopped suddenly in his stroll, hearing close by the merry laugh of childhood, which had for him at all times and seasons the charm of fascination. He stole on tiptoe down the narrow by-path, and peeped over the gate. There was a group of young ones seated under his bushy but well-trimmed hedge. Two of them were very busy threading a buttercup-and-daisy chain, while two younger, mere toddlers, got the little flowers in readiness for their seniors, out of an old straw hat, filled with the wild produce of the green lanes and golden-covered fields. He watched them with his own peculiar smile of benevolence, and kind, glistening eye. Cheerily they prattled on ; gaily rung their innocent and happy mirth. He stood for some minutes in silence, enjoying to the full this bright scene of nature, free and unsophisticated, of fresh young hearts, all pure and unalloyed, as yet unsullied by contact with the world.

Presently his full soft voice is heard, and the children, dropping their wild flowers, look up and around them wistfully. He sings, "I know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows."

One, the youngest prattler of the party, discovers from whence the voice proceeds, and runs to the gate close under cover of the hedge, and gazes up into the old man's face timidly. He soon makes friends with them all, and they all gather round him, and follow him, at his bidding, to the house, where he sets his old Indian servant to work, to amuse them with sweetmeats, beads, &c., while, according to his directions, cakes and good things are prepared for their tea—messages being sent to their parents as to where they are. After tea, he goes and sits with them all in the housekeeper's room, and sings them some funny songs he remembers were sung to him in his own far distant childhood. They go home so delighted—so full of the kind old General and all his wonderful birds and beasts, and pretty things, that many of their play-

fellows stand with longing eyes, the next day, at the same gate, thinking to obtain the good luck of their little comrades.

After his little party had left, the old man sat for a long while in the housekeeper's room, planning for the sick and poor around his domain. He then went into his library, and smoked his meerschaum. There was an expression in his kind old face which led one to believe that he enjoyed the "solace of his pipe." And perhaps it spoke truly, for he murmured, after a time, "I wish that silly little Rose was not so squeamish. I'm sure she might come back again now. I shall write and tell her so. Women may carry all that sort of thing too far. But I dare say she's right, bless her! she's a good old boy—only poor Riggins not down here often now; so she needn't fear collision."

But we must now leave our old favourite for a time, and return to Ernest Morley, to whom we are no less attached.

It is between nine and ten o'clock; he has arrived in Doverton, and, with his coat-collar turned up, and his hat drawn over his

eyes, so as to conceal his face as much as possible, he leaves the village, and passes, for a "near cut," to the "Gull," down the dark, narrow, intricate windings of the Gin Way. He had heard of Gin Way as being "a horribly low place," but he had not conceived it to be of the very foul description its appearance warranted. Having resolved to proceed along the deserted cliff, or shorter shore (according to the tide), from the "Gull" to the other end of Doverton, and then, instead of going up to Sea View, to become the guest of his good old tutor for the night, visiting on the following morning the uncle of the poor youth he had befriended, and whose early death and blighted career he so truly mourned,—he had proceeded but a short distance, when he felt almost disposed to turn back, for, by the gloomy light emitted from the open doors and windows of some of the dirty, crazy-looking dwellings, he perceived a ferocity in many of the faces and figures of their inmates that did not tend to inspire courage into the breast of so lonely

a traveller as himself. He judged, and, perhaps, not without reason, that he might be watched by some of these ill-grained individuals, and, maybe, robbed, if nothing worse, on his solitary way. Just as he turned a corner leading to another winding, and had fully determined to turn, should that present no better or more propitious aspect than the former, he was attracted by sundry cries, half-jocular, half-earnest, and the rushing onwards of men, women, and children from their different abodes—some with lanterns, aided by which he soon discerned the meaning of the hubbub, which, ere he reached the scene of action, had increased into a wild uproar.

An old woman lay upon the rough stony pathway in her scanty night-attire. At first, Morley feared she presented the too common and loathsome spectacle of the effects of liquor ; but he soon learnt, from the energetic speaking and furious gestures of the bystanders, that the case was one of a nature more heartrending still,—the bed to

which the poor creature had been confined for years, having been seized for debt, and one by one the miserable articles of furniture taken away from the poverty-stricken dwelling, amid the squabbling of some, and frantic menaces of others, composing that motley and degenerated crowd.

To Morley's sorrow and surprise, deeply as most present appeared incensed against these proceedings, there was not one of the women present—and there were many—who offered to take the poor old creature in. One had indeed removed a shawl from her own shoulders, to place around those of the pale form before her, shrivelled with age, and helpless. Though much averse to making himself conspicuous in such a very questionable group, Morley, deeming it to be his bounden duty to interfere on behalf of the poor woman, whose truly disconsolate and friendless condition touched his heart to the core, he stepped forward suddenly among them, and addressed the woman who had tendered her shawl.

“Has this poor soul no friends?” he asked, while every eye was bent curiously upon him.

“No, sir,” replied the woman ; “her son is at sea.”

“It’s a cursed shame,” began a burly built man, with a daring, insolent air, “to treat the old beldame so, though she did scratch a bit.” His coarse laugh was echoed loudly by several around, while some stood silently awaiting the reply of the stranger.

“Will you not house her, and feed her, till her son’s return?” asked Morley of the woman.

The laugh around was repeated louder than before, accompanied by several ribald jests ; while the woman, whose countenance Morley did not altogether dislike, said, “Lor’ ! sir, you don’t know what an old cat she is at times !”

“I’m sure I don’t wonder at it, mother,” remarked a boy, some ten years old, at her elbow, “she’s had nothing to eat these three days, except what Hal’s taken her.”

“Who is Hal?” asked Ernest, very

anxious to cut short this scene, and hasten on his way, not relishing the keen glances of some men who stood near him.

"He's my brother," said the boy; "we're both fond of Dick Harding—that's his mother."

Now Morley had not heard of Dick Harding. Rose had mentioned "the sailor" to him as having interfered for her, and perhaps saved her life that fearful night upon the beach; but in the natural excitement, caused by all that had taken place, his name had not been given.

"Will you take her in, and take care of her, if I pay you for it?" questioned Morley, in a low tone, of the woman. The answer was given in the affirmative; and, in the same voice, Morley promised "to give more when the present supply was at an end, if she sent her son to the Reverend W. Greenhill's, the Vicar of Oakleaf, near Doverton." And then, holding out his purse, he spoke aloud, "This is all I have with me, for I never carry much—three pounds, and some loose silver—I wish I had

more for the poor old creature.—Good night to you all !”

The answer, “Good night, sir !” was echoed by almost every lip present, and Ernest passed on safely ;—yes, there was no fear of his being molested by one of that crowd. The only inconvenience he experienced was in the discovery that his pocket-book had disappeared, which luckily contained only a few memorandums, and a little note from poor Ralph.

He traversed speedily and in safety the lone road to the “Gull,” but the night being dark, he with difficulty descended the rugged pathway of the cliff. There was a light gleaming in the bar when he approached, but it disappeared immediately on his challenge for admission. He knocked three times loudly, thinking it best to make known his business at once, and get the affair over, which he began to consider was anything but a pleasant one. He had again applied his fist to the door, and was about to use the top of his thick walking-stick for the same purpose, when it was opened sud-

denly upon him—not by the woman Dacey, as he had expected, but by a tall, powerfully built man, with as daring a countenance, and as wild a bearing, as one can well conceive.

“Well, what do you want here?” he asked, in rude, impatient accents.

“I want to see Mrs. Dacey,” answered Morley, gently.

“What do you want with her? Whoever wants my wife wants me,” replied the man in the same manner as before.

“I merely wished to ask her a question. You certainly could answer it as well as she—perhaps better,” said Ernest, with a denotation of firmness which did not escape the other.

“Perhaps you’ll name it,” was the laconic reply.

“Do you happen to know where Mr. Bruce the lawyer is, at the present time?” demanded Morley, boldly.

“Mr. Bruce the lawyer!” echoed the host of the “Gull.” “What the h—ll have we to do with Mr. Bruce? We’ve

quite enough to do with our own affairs—we meddle with no one else's, and no one had better meddle with ours, or perhaps they'll find out their mistake!"

"There was no offence meant by the question," remarked Ernest, quietly. "Hearing he had been here about some of his tenants, I thought you might possibly know if he were still in the neighbourhood."

"The last I heard of him, he was about to sail for America," observed the man, in a somewhat milder strain, still keeping his flashing eye bent enquiringly upon his visitor.

"You think he has sailed then? Thank you."

"I think nothing about him or his movements; they're nothing to me. I mind my own business; it would be as well for other people to mind theirs. You'll learn nothing here. The 'Gull's' no tattler, and it gives no news, so it's of little use in any one trying for what they can't get, and may be'll bring no good to themselves. You'd better be off, young Shiner!" And with these

words the door was shut very unceremoniously in Morley's face.

The tide was out at its farthest ; and the way by the shore being considerably shorter than that of the cliff, he continuing his descent at rather too rapid a pace, his foot stumbled against a fragment of the rock, when losing his balance, he rolled over for some paces down the declivity. He had just stayed himself, and, in spite of a few slight bruises, was smiling in amusement at his most uncomfortable and unsatisfactory adventure, when he heard a low, strange-sounding whistle and footsteps some paces above him. Crouched as he was, not having yet arisen from his fall, he did not fear being perceived, unless the person or persons were following in his track. On this point, however, he was soon made satisfied ; for on looking up in the dim light he distinctly saw the figure of a man turn the angle leading to the "Gull," the door of which he then heard open and shut. Much relieved to find he was as yet free from any follower, he made the best of his way along

the sands, and finally reached Oakleaf and his good old friend the vicar in safety. . . .

It was that time of the year when one can hardly decide whether fires are requisite or not—frosty nights and sometimes warm, sunshiny days—but when there was no fire the Doctor would stand in that same way upon the hearthrug, and like many more of his countrymen, with his back to the grate and his hands behind him. However, this morning the breakfast was laid at Sea View, and the Doctor stood with his back to the fire, which blazed brightly, and no wonder, for the Doctor, who was in one of his irritable moods, had done nothing but stir it continually while waiting for his good lady, or, as he generally called her, his “old woman.” Presently, just as the scowl on the Doctor’s brow proclaimed the consumption of his stock of patience, the “old woman” made her appearance and began pouring out the coffee.

“Why the d——l doesn’t that fellow bring in the paper?” cried the Doctor, ringing furiously.

"It has only just come, my love—perhaps he is waiting to bring in the toast with it," said good Aunt Rachel.

"Humph!" ejaculated the Doctor. "Is that girl getting up to breakfast?"

"Eve? Yes, my dear, she'll be down presently. I think it is too much for her to get up, but she wished to do it, as you like to see her at breakfast."

"Too much for her!" sneered her snarly husband; "just as if the morning air wasn't the best dose for her!"

"Well, my dear, I only mean that the day is long for her—she is so weak."

"You'd better cut it shorter—what a precious spoony you look this morning!"

The Doctor turned his petulance into a joke, as he often did, for kind Mrs. Thornton's invariable good-nature frequently turned the tide.

"You are very complimentary, I'm sure," she said, joining in the laugh against her.

"I don't think aunty's very well; she's got a headache," observed Eve, who had just glided into the room, and kissed the Doctor's forehead.

“No ; you’re a couple of spoonies,” was the Doctor’s remark, as, still laughing at his own raillery, he took up the *Times*, which lay beside him. He had perused it for some moments in silence, as was his custom, as he sipped his coffee. Mrs. Thornton, rallied by her husband’s bantering, remarked that if he came to anything particular, he might read it aloud.

“Some case of shoplifting, I suppose,” he replied, satirically, “or murder, &c.; you women like all those things best, don’t you ? Here ! here’s *Awful Suicide* ! Now, will that do for you ? ”

Still smiling, he glanced down the column. The paper dropped from his hand ; he fell back in his chair. Mrs. Thornton and Eve hastened to him in alarm. For the first time in his life he had fainted. Terribly frightened, Aunt Rachel rang the bell, and shouted aloud for Joan ; soon restoratives were administered, and the Doctor gave signs of returning animation.

“What could it have been that made you like this ? ” asked Mrs. Thornton, as she sup-

ported him with her trembling arm ; but Eve, meanwhile, had taken up the fatal paper, and, with an agonizing cry, now fell senseless on the floor. All attention was instantly turned to her ; the Doctor, with a livid cheek himself, chafed her face and hands ; but it was very long—indeed, not till Dr. Thornton had sent for further advice—before sensibility returned. Morley, who had arrived in the midst of this trying scene, had gone off for the surgeon resident in the village, and returned with him fully an hour before there was any sign of awakening life. Great was the terror of all at Sea View, for the awful news of that morning had spread to every inmate therein, and it was feared it would cost poor Eve her life. And it did cost her life, in truth ; or, at all events, as far as human knowledge can tell, it hastened the close of her brief journey here. For though sense returned to her shattered frame, and she was permitted to breathe the fresh, sweet air again, and wander forth among the early flowers, yet, ere those of summer were full blown, she

had passed with the spring blossoms in purity away ! Yes ; Eve Ending had received her deathblow.

For upwards of two hours were the Doctor and Ernest Morley closeted together. He managed his part well ; for the former entertained not the slightest idea that he knew more of the late affair than he said he had been entrusted to reveal. Still Morley could not bring the uncle of the poor murdered youth to see his death in any other light than that of *suicide* ; and he was so dreadfully affected during the conference that Morley did not persist in a supposition which had arisen in his mind simply from disconnected circumstances. Still this supposition, or to speak more truly, this conviction, remained rooted firmly in Morley's mind. In vain he tried to divest himself of his harrowing doubts and suspicions ; he could not do away with the painful conception that Blight and the rough countryman of Newman Street were one and the same person.

The Doctor's grief was so unbounded at first that it much astonished Morley, who

called to remembrance his indifference to the poor youth's feelings in his lifetime. He had not liked to hint at the purport of his visit for some time after they had sat down together, in the Doctor's consulting-room; hither he had taken Morley on his desire to speak with him alone. And now he had summoned resolution to say, as had been settled at the Villa, "that he had been told in the strictest confidence to assure the Doctor that the poor lady of the beach was with friends, and would trouble him no more."

He noticed the blood rush up to the roots of the Doctor's hair as he repeated this declaration, but he was surprised to find how soon the conversation was turned to the poor deceased again, the Doctor merely saying, carelessly, that "the person on the beach was the illegitimate child of a sister of his, whom he never named, as she had disgraced her family; that the girl had always been odd from her birth, and had taken a fancy to some low woman, with whom she resided;" and "that he was heartily glad to find her

low friends could support her without his further aid."

It is unnecessary to say how little credit Morley gave the Doctor for his veracity in this instance ; he gradually wound his attention round once more to the strange disguise of Blight on the night he had seen him, and his after appearance, or at least the similarity of that of the countryman seen by the girl in Newman Street. But the Doctor quite ridiculed the idea that either of the parties could have been Blight.

"Why, Morley, come, come!" he said ; "he may be a confounded hypocrite, and all that, but whatever could drive into your head that he is a murderer?"

Morley repeated his certainty of the man he had seen being no other than Blight.

"That may be accounted for," remarked the Doctor, who fully believed he should see Blight, or hear from him, before the week was out, and who was preparing a volley of abuse for his man of law when he did meet him, for having managed the affair so miserably. "He has some tenants of mine

in a place called Gin Way, down in Lower Doverton, of the very worst description ; he is obliged to deal very strangely with them, I know. I must give that property up, it's a clear loss."

And then he asked numerous questions relative to poor Ralph, and his sorrow burst out anew. Morley begged him to be calm, for it is awful to see a man weep, especially one of so unrelenting a temperament as the Doctor ! He did not seem to mind displaying his grief before Ernest Morley ; perhaps because he had been a mediator, and an unsuccessful one, between him and the neglected boy. But the chief cause of his great sorrow was apparent when he wrung Ernest's hand at parting. He hesitated in his speech, while fresh tears bedewed his visage, and at length stammered out,—

"Did he ever show you my letter ?"

"No," said Morley, pausing to consider.

"Not that letter !—that brutal letter ! O, Morley, never mention it ; *I cast off for ever my dead brother's child !* He bequeathed

him to me on his deathbed ! Oh ! how he loved him ! Morley, I believe *that letter murdered him* ; yes, I believe it, nothing else."

Ernest perceived the excited state of the Doctor's mind, and tried all in his power to soothe him. He persuaded him from his desire to go back to London with him, assuring him that he would superintend all matters regarding poor Ralph. And with a loaded heart he returned by that night's mail to the metropolis.

That evening Dr. Thornton blamed himself in no common degree for having "displayed his feelings to such an extent to young Morley." Nevertheless, he could hardly keep his heavy grief from the eyes of the menials of his household, and at length he locked himself in his dressing-room, and there indulged his bitter meditations far into the night.

"This bungling affair of Blight's," as he mentally termed it, exasperated him excessively, and what puzzled him to a most trying extent was the fact that the lawyer

had neither paid him a visit, which he naturally imagined he would have done, immediately on the failure of his attempt, or written to him concerning it. That force had been resorted to in that attempt, he did not doubt, and again was his cheek dyed as he recollected it was by his permission it had been used if needed.

“How ever could the woman Bertram have discovered his residence, or that he was in any way connected with her charge?” for he supposed that it was by her and her humble friends alone that the message had been sent. “She must have found out that Morley was in the habit of visiting here. Well, one comfort is in it, that he is to be depended upon—for he is not one to prate of other people’s concerns—still, I didn’t altogether like his look when I was telling him who she was. He may have his suspicions that she is no niece of mine, &c., and yet it may have been my fancy, for he did not seem the least curious about the matter. What in the world could put it into his head that Blight had anything to

do with the poor boy's death ? Oh ! that's madness, it's like the world ; just because the one thing happened near the other, they put this and that together and make wonders. Poor, poor lad ! Would to God *he* had done it rather than *I*." And he paced his room in a terrible state of mind, cursing himself over and over again for having sent that letter. " And I don't believe I should have sent it," he muttered aloud, " if it hadn't been for that hypocrite. Get my affairs cleared, and I'll have nothing more to do with him. I shall see him in a day or two, for, if he doesn't show his blarney face here, I'll go to him ; and he'll get it from me as he never got it before ! I never should have done as I did with the boy if it hadn't been for him." And thus he continued, striving to convince himself against the qualms of his conscience, (which, nevertheless, would be heard,) that it was not so much his fault as his legal adviser's.

And days passed and still no Blight appeared. The Doctor waited patiently one whole week, judging that the crafty lawyer

might still be endeavouring to effect the purpose he had undertaken—the removal of the lunatic. In which case he, to use his own reflection, “would materially soften the blowing-up he had prepared for the wily man of law, who then, with all his sneaking ways, he could not but acknowledge would prove himself a clever fellow.”

But time wore on; the stir of fearful excitement, occasioned by the sudden and awful death of the artist, had gradually subsided, when the Doctor, who had made his second journey to town, in a most disturbed state at the non-appearance of the lawyer, drove to Morley's hotel, where he found that young gentleman in very earnest conversation with a cutler, at whose shop he had discovered, after endless trouble and exertion, the long knife was purchased, which was found buried in the body of his poor friend. The Doctor, who had feared Morley would by this time have left London, now entered warmly into the present discussion, and owned his misgivings that Ernest's first suspicions were not without foundation.

That Blight had absconded was now quite evident, and it was beyond his understanding to conceive the cause of his disappearance, unless he was in some way implicated in the late mysterious affair. Still he could not be brought even to suppose, that he had been the actual murderer. He little imagined the real features of the case. Totally ignorant of the youth's wild passion for Eve Ending, which had sobered into one so gentle and so true ; of the deadly feelings of hatred and revenge stirring the corroded breast of the heinous Blight, he was alike impotent and incapable of judging.

The knife had been purchased by a boy—so stated the cutler—seemingly about fourteen. He had said it was “to stick his father's pigs.” There were several people in his shop at the time ; his wife had served him ; he had not remarked whether anybody else entered the shop with the boy ; he didn't know what the boy was like, perhaps his wife did, she took more notice, &c.”

So, as the Doctor's cab stood at the door of the hotel, waiting for him, Morley deemed

it best, that he, with the Doctor, should drive with the cutler to his shop, and interrogate his wife, which they did ; but there was no tangible evidence to be obtained—nothing further than “that a boy had bought that knife on the day preceding the night on which the murder or suicide had been committed. Nevertheless, the hue and cry was now raised for Blight, the suspected murderer. The Doctor returned to Doverton, where, on her little couch, lay Eve, patiently and sweetly fading away.

CHAPTER VII.

“The cares of life are truly said
To be the shoals and spray
Of the light bark, and overhead
Darken the mariner’s way.”

“She was a bud of beauty, just opening to the light;
None saw her petals, closing or stayed the gnawing
Blight!

Her sun of youth went down ’mid doubts and anxious
fears:

This is her tale of sorrow, her pilgrimage of tears!”

“In paradise we can but know more happiness than
this.”

In the meanwhile, Rose Lindsay’s bloom did not altogether stand proof against these trying events. She had gone down to Teevesdale, in obedience to her mother’s wishes and the old General’s summons, albeit she would much rather have hastened to Sea View, on hearing the sad effect of Ralph’s

death upon her old playmate and much valued friend, Eve Ending. But Mrs. Lindsay persisted in her daughter having a little rest of mind and enjoyment before visiting the sinking invalid—the pale flower now drooping daily.

Rose received a good scolding on her arrival at the Park, for “staying away so long, to get smoke-dried and miserable;” and she was almost tempted to be angry with her dear old uncle, for the first time in his life, when, in allusion to the artist’s decease and its consequences, he had said, “It was no use worrying any longer about the chap: if he had not been such an insufferable puppy, he should not so much wonder at people making such a fuss about him.”

Now the fresh air and the pleasurable life she led soon revived Rose Lindsay’s spirits, for the “buoyancy of youth overcometh much.” Nevertheless at times she felt a dreary weight at her heart in remembrance of all that had transpired. The mystery which hung about the untimely death of the poor young painter, and the no less a one

attached to those passages in the past life of Dr. Thornton and the Lady Vernon—these conflicting reflections often made her very sad and dispirited. The General at such times would joke her, saying he did not think he should ever let her go away again; but she would reply that she must do so soon, on account of dear Eve Ending.

Indeed she longed much to see her darling, and solace her torn and aching heart, for she had, as we know, the knowledge of Eve's secret—her treasured love for him whose career had been so briefly closed. Had she known how swiftly the fair girl was being borne upon the wing of Love and Mercy to join her murdered lover in the Home of Peace above, she would indeed have hastened to her in spite of her uncle's wishes and her own shaken nerves. But weeks passed by, and still found Rose busily visiting, with her doating uncle, all his pets, animate and inanimate; and although her wonted elasticity of spirits had not quite returned, she was very, very happy.

Morley had returned home. Every search

had been made for the missing Blight to no effect; and so slight was the ground of suspicion, that gradually the matter had cooled down, as such matters will when fresh ones of a similar nature are occurring with such sad frequency around us.

Sir Edward Morley had given his consent to his son's union with the heiress of Teevesdale Park, and delicious were the rambles in wood and grove at evening time, and the sweet heart-union of the lovers. If it had not been for the shoals of life, the perplexing doubt, and harrowing fear, Rose Lindsay's cup of happiness would have been full to overflowing. She repeats this now with a sigh, as she remembers the instability of human joy.

The "wheel of fate," as some say—but as we would rather quote, "the hand of Providence"—was turning, in mercy, the intricate and entangled thread; and although it did erewhile gall, with its goading pressure, the hearts of those whom we could have wished exempt from the chafing cord, it was only to chasten them with the lesson,

“to place not their trust in man,” and “to lean more confidently upon that Arm which is stronger than one of flesh !” “He whom He loveth the Lord chasteneth,” and “He leadeth him through the deep waters.”

One evening Rose had sauntered forth in the direction of the old Court. Ernest was later than usual. If he did not dine at the General's, he generally appeared during the dessert, to spend the remainder of the evening with his betrothed. He was now residing alone, “monarch of all he surveyed,” his parents and Gertrude having gone to remain a short time with his married sister, prior to taking up their summer residence at their estate in B——shire. They did not intend returning to the Court until after their son's marriage, which, it was supposed, would take place before the commencement of the following year. Then they purposed coming to welcome the bride.

Rose had nearly reached the boundary of the Park when she saw Morley quickly advancing from the Rookery, which was

separated from her uncle's domain merely by an invisible fence.

"What is the matter?" she cried, hurrying to meet him; but seeing his smile, she judged it could be nothing of much importance that had detained him.

"I've only had a visitor," he replied, laughing; "but what a nervous little puss you are getting. It's certainly rather unusual for me to have a visitor at this time in the evening, and especially a *lady*. Who do you think it was?"

Rose, laughing, said "she couldn't possibly tell; but it looked very suspicious."

"Well," said Morley, "it was no less a person than Mrs. Bounce."

"Mrs. Bounce!" echoed Rose, surprisedly.

"Yes," again laughed Morley, "and she was more bouncing than ever. It seems a poor woman, whom poor Ralph and I once relieved, has called twice at the studio, and says her mother, who is old and bedridden, wants to see me. Mrs. Bounce seems to think there's a 'great deal in it,' as she

says, 'which doesn't meet the eye.' She means with reference to our poor Ralph's death; but, as I told her, it is more likely the poor soul wants fresh relief. However, I have told her to relieve the woman if she calls again, and to ask what it is her mother has to say. I should have thought there might have been something in it, perhaps, only, from Mrs. Bounce's account, each time the woman has been she has smelt strongly of liquor, and on her last visit could not articulate plainly. Well, what do you think of it, Rosey? You look in a brown study."

"I think you ought to find out by all means where the woman lives, and go to her," replied Miss Lindsay.

"Oh, I know where she lives." Morley then gave the account of the walk from the studio, which the reader is acquainted with. "But you are as bad as that old Bounce. What can the old bedridden woman have to say to me?"

"Sometimes I think you men are like a parcel of children," returned Rose, laughing, while Ernest kissed her for her

impudence. "How can you possibly tell what strange revelation it may be in that woman's power to make?" she added, emphatically.

"You say we men are like children, Rosey. Upon my word, you women have sometimes a most *witch-like* manner. But, joking apart, there may be something in it, after all, as Mrs. Bounce would say. I will go up to town to-morrow morning."

"And I with you," said Rose, firmly.

Morley turned, and looked in her face with unfeigned astonishment.

"My darling, you can't mean to go with me to the old woman? Why, you've no conception what a vile neighbourhood it is."

"The greater reason why I should accompany you," remarked Rose, coolly.

"But, my dear girl, I would not have you go there on any account. What good can it do?"

"Never mind," replied Miss Lindsay, assuming a very pretty little air of authority; "I mean to go, that is sufficient. Now you see what a woman's will is—you see what

you'll have to encounter—I have said it, and I shall go—I must and I will—there !”

Rose looked very bewitching in her obstinacy, and Morley, seeing she was thus bent on going with him, did not further oppose her desire. Accordingly the old General was informed that evening of Morley's especial business in London, and Rose's wish to accompany him, that she might run down to Doverton for a day or two, and try to cheer poor Eve, who she feared, from her aunt's last letter, was getting rapidly worse.

It was a pouring wet afternoon when Rose and Morley arrived in London. After partaking of some slight refreshment at the terminus, they took a cab and drove to the miserable abode of the widow Hopeless. When they had mounted the dark creaking staircase, they were met by the same dirty, neglected-looking girl whom Morley had rescued from the ill usage of her mother. She ushered them into a small chamber, the foul appearance and polluted atmosphere of which struck both visitors with a painful sense of the world's misery and destitution.

The pale wretched widow was propping up her mother, who seemed gasping for breath, with bundles of old garments on the worn-out, rickety bedstead. The old Kildew made an effort to speak on the entrance of Miss Lindsay and Mr. Morley, but failed in her endeavour, merely uttering a strange guttural sound. Her end was evidently fast approaching.

"My mother wished to speak a few words to you, sir, before she dies," said the widow respectfully, dropping a curtsy as she glanced at Miss Lindsay.

"Does she?" replied Morley, with concern. "I trust I am not too late in obeying her summons—what is it about?" he asked, with a quick beating at his heart, a feeling shared to the full by Rose, both imagining to hear at last something concerning the death of the artist; but they were mistaken, as undoubtedly the reader will presume.

"It is about a lady, sir, who was, many years ago now, going to marry Mr. Thornton's father."

"Mr. Thornton's father?—he died when

my poor friend was an infant—how many years is it ago?”

Morley looked at Rose, who, sitting down exhaustedly on the chair placed for her at the foot of the bed, bowed her head in silence in answer to his gaze.

“Not more than sixteen, I should think, if it is that,” returned the widow, observing the look exchanged.

“Mother shared in a dreadful outrage against her—she did it for gain—but she says she cannot die in peace before making her conscience clear, although I have told her I fear it is useless now, as I heard she had been dead some time—that poor lady—but if you will wait a few moments, I’ll get mother a draught; she’ll speak better then, I daresay.”

And the widow opened a cupboard; taking from thence a phial, she poured its contents down the gasping throat of the decrepit old woman.

“She was beautiful—she was beautiful,” she exclaimed, in broken accents, as soon as she had swallowed the liquid; “and good as

she was beautiful. The Doctor left her in my cottage in Shooter's Hill; he was obliged to go away; he left her under the care of his lawyer, Blight—the wretch! the dastard!—oh! if he were here, I'd tear his eyes out—I'd ——”

“Hush, mother, hush! there's a lady here,” put in the woe-worn widow.

“Then they were not married?” questioned Rose tremulously, for her cheek had grown very white.

“No, lady, no; but they were as good as though they had been; her wedding things were all made; she counted on her absent lover; we stopped the letters; we made her believe he had deserted her—that villain did; he wanted her for his own toy; he tried even force, but her screams were heard. Ah! lady, dear! it is too terrible for you to hear.”

Rose, indeed, looked ghastly white at the description of the sufferings, and the knowledge of the wrecked happiness and isolated existence of her who had been so loved and honoured. Many particulars of the direful

story did Kildew give, which have been already made known to our readers.

She was becoming very incoherent, when, after repeating again and again her animosity to Blight, she begged Morley to acquaint the Doctor (whom she had supposed to be the father of the artist) with her confession, and also to assure him that his lady's love was as true as gold, and that she pined for him until her reason was driven away, and Blight had fed upon her heart-strings.

She then pointed to her daughter's child, and made another desperate effort at articulation, when the widow said, "Mother, that'll do ! You have told *all* !" in a tone and with a gesture which attracted the attention of both her auditors, and led Morley to ask if her mother had had anything to do with Mr. Blight since they had shared in the terrible plot against the poor lady.

She replied, " Oh, no, sir ! she has never even seen him," with a truthfulness of countenance which completely allayed any pre-

conceived suspicion in either his own breast or that of Rose Lindsay.

"Then you, of course, can form no idea now, of where this wretch of all wretches may be hidden?" continued Morley.

"Oh, dear, no, sir! we only heard the other day he was missing; and that, I think, first made mother think so of what is past."

There was something in the speaker's face as she repeated these words which impelled Miss Lindsay to enquire, fixing her large tearful eyes on those of the widow, if she had known Blight, as well as her mother.

"I did at that time, miss," was the answer, while a faint colour stole into the wan sunken cheek of Hopeless. Rose glanced at the child—what idea may have glimmered in her mind we cannot say; but a strong conviction of the truth regarding the girl's unhappy origin took hold of that of Ernest Morley.

"Well, now, dearest, we had better go. Your mother, you say, has told all she has to tell," added he, turning to the widow

again. "And you are quite sure you have had no dealings with the lawyer Blight during the years which have elapsed since your mother nursed the Lady Vernon?"

"Vernon! ha! Vernon!" gasped Kildew, as she tried hard for utterance. "Ha, ha!" the contortions of her visage were horrible as she made this attempt at mirth. "Vernon—I forgot we gave her that name—Mrs. Vernon!"

"What was her real name, then?" asked Rose, who had risen from her chair at the foot of the bed, and stood there, looking pale and horrified at these disclosures of the heartless villany of the lawyer.

"Her name—why, sure, 'twas *Ella Clare!*"

A cry escaped Rose Lindsay's lips, not loud, but piercing. Morley caught her in his arms; but, dizzy and bewildered as she felt, and deathlike as she looked, her senses did not desert her.—*She had found and rescued the long lost child of General Lindsay!*

Hurriedly whispering, "Let us go directly," she laid her trembling hand on her lover's arm, and, shaking in every limb, descended the stairs.

When seated in the cab, he asked, for the first time, the cause of her deep emotion, and was almost as much affected as herself when she revealed the history of the General's wrongs, which he had borne so bravely; and he shared equally in her joy at having been the means of restoring the poor blighted flower to its native stem. Ah! how intensely happy was Rose, as she gazed lovingly that night upon the unknown yet much-loved child of her dear old uncle! Well did she remember his words,—“And yet the thought is always harrowing, *that I have never seen my child!*”

And now he would see her, and, sad wreck as she was, he would take her to his fond, kind bosom with twofold tenderness. The time-worn yearnings of his heart would be filled, and he would have reason to say at the close of a long good life, when he should go down to the grave, “like a shock of corn

in due season," "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

We need not stay to relate the great joy at the Villa on the arrival of the General the next evening, with Ernest Morley, who had been sent to fetch him, with strict injunctions from Rose, to break the news carefully and tenderly, lest the shock of such unlooked-for happiness should prove too much for his aged frame. The sight was too affecting for those present when he locked his long-lost daughter in his arms—the child his heart had treasured, though torn from him, as he had feared for ever. They quitted the room as the old man, kneeling, poured forth his praise and thankfulness to God. They closed the door upon feelings so truly sacred. Parts of the sad history of Ella were revealed to the General by Rose and Morley. They told of the infamy of Blight, but they effectually concealed anything which might lead to the mention of Dr. Thornton.

Although the veteran's eye flashed and the arm of the old soldier was raised, as he listened to the bitter wrongs inflicted towards

his child, he agreed with those around him in the opinion that it would be useless to make any stir in the matter until the base destroyer of her peace should be brought to light. He expressed a great desire to discover him who had won her young devoted heart; but not having the slightest clue, his wishes became subdued, and the matter dropped. For three or four days he remained at the Villa hovering over his child, as Rose said, "like a hen over her one chick." It was ludicrous to see the number of dresses he ordered to be made, and the loads of finery he purchased for her. He would have made himself more ridiculous still, in the ecstatic impulse of his warm, generous heart, by taking her to the Zoological Gardens, the Pantheon, &c., imagining this sight-seeing might tend to the opening of her poor closed mind; but Mrs. Lindsay used her influence against these proceedings, together with Rose, for both had remarked that the late excitement and material change of life, had not passed without leaving traces, either for better or for worse, which time could alone

prove, upon the darkened intellect of the poor lunatic.

At the close of the week the rejoicing father, with his child and nurse, as he called Mrs. Bertram, quitted London for Teevesdale, sadly wishing Rose to accompany them. But a letter had arrived the day previous from Aunt Rachel, in which she had said that Eve grew worse daily, and that, although sometimes, it was wonderful to see how cheerful she became, she knew from the Doctor's manner (who looked very ill and anxious) that he did not consider she would last long. She then proceeded to state her own excessive grief at the thoughts of losing the sweet gentle girl she had nurtured from infancy, in terms which brought many tears to the eyes of those who read, and concluded by stating that Eve had again expressed a great wish to see her young friend, who, she had said, she feared was offended with the Doctor for looking at her manuscript, and speaking so rudely to her when last staying at Sea View. The rough pony was quite well, and the Doctor went to

see it himself every day. Would Rose come directly if she could?

Little did good Aunt Rachel imagine all the conflicting emotions poor Rose had had to endure, how much she had brought to pass, and how very little her own feelings had been heeded. She lay thinking of this the night after the departure of her uncle, and that preceding her own visit to Doverton. Her dear Ernest would have escorted her there, but he had been called to his father a few days before on some affair of business. Consequently, she was anticipating the journey alone, never caring to do as her uncle desired her—"always to take a servant with her."

Mrs. Lindsay was never very uneasy on these occasions, as the people at M—— station knew Rose well from her constant visits; and she could always procure a fly to Sea View, if the Doctor's carriage was not there to meet her.

Yes, she lay pondering on the startling events of the recent past. She thought how strange it was for Uncle Lindsay to have a

daughter. And although void of sense, she was still the same to him. She thought how very strange it would seem, when she went to Teevesdale, to feel herself no longer the chief there ; and a slight thrill ran through her as she thought also (for the first time) *that she was no longer the heiress of Teevesdale Park*. No, surely not ! Uncle Lindsay would not place her before his child ! She knew, and owned to herself, with tears of gratitude, that her old fond uncle would leave her well off. That was more than she had any right now to claim ; but that she was no longer his heiress she clearly saw, and wondered if Ernest and her mother had thought of this. Yes, she was no longer the heiress ! Gladly, and in the fulness of her spirit, she had restored the rightful successor, and had *disinherited herself* ! Noble-hearted Rose Lindsay !—brave girl and true ! She cared not for herself ; but a chill came over her as she remembered the *pride of Sir Edward Morley* !

CHAPTER VIII.

“Night was approaching, and the day
Had glorious been ;
Like a lily pale, she lay,
While one unseen
Wept by her side—nor could be comforted.”

“The flowers He gathers are for a wreath divine.”—
Rose's Offering.

“Let us be patient! These severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.”—LONGFELLOW.

It was evening, and a calm, delicious evening it was, at Sea View. The day had been the first of summer that year. Although the spring had been fraught with chill winds and drenching rains, vegetation was nevertheless forward, and the foliage exulting in all its first rich fulness—her most beautiful

garb. The fresh breeze which had stirred the leaves and blossoms all the day, had now subsided, and all in the outer world was peaceful and at rest. Only the murmuring ripple of the waves could be heard faintly, ever and anon, in the little chamber where Eve lay. A flood of gold from the setting sun poured in at the open casement. The couch on which she had reclined the day before was drawn close to it, but the night had been one of great suffering, and on that couch now lay all her long fair tresses, lit up like threads of gold with the radiant burst of nature's glory. Yet though stripped of that adornment, how beautiful looked the sculpture-like face in its sweet, childish innocence ! As she lay on her little white bed, so still, so motionless, her eyelids closed, her lips just parted, anybody, to have entered there, ignorant of what had passed, and what was passing, might have divined her gentle spirit had already flown. But, no ; the great Reaper had indeed been sent, and he now held his sickle over that much-loved opening flower—

“He gazed upon it with tearful eyes,
He kissed its drooping leaves;
It was for the Lord of Paradise
He bound it in his sheaves.”

Mrs. Thornton, quite worn out with watching, had gone to lie down in her own room, where she now remained in a deep and heavy sleep. Poor soul! it was a relief to her almost unbearable sorrow. Joan had sat in her darling's room until she was dismissed very petulantly for not stifling her sobs, by her master, to follow her mistress's example; but, although she did as she was bid, and rested upon the couch at the foot of good Aunt Rachel's bed, she could not sleep, but stole, every now and then, with noiseless step, to peep at the sufferer—the child whom she had loved and tended from earliest infancy, and whose angelic nature and sweet affection had wound round the old woman's heartstrings. And the Doctor?—he who had censured so rudely the grief of another—did he feel free from its gnawing influence? Was he himself unshackled by the bitter pang? No, no! There he

sat by the bedside; the curtain drawn between him and that fast-fading flower—that bud of purity. Many times did he bend forward to gaze upon what should soon be lost to him for ever. He thought Eve slept—he was wrong. She lay in that extreme exhaustion, the reaction of intense pain, when to move a limb were purgatory, to raise an eyelid a heavy task for the failing strength. All her young life—all its struggles, doubts, and joys—fitted by her; the passages of years centred into one little space—her childhood's little troubles—the fears of after years—her love—her bitter trial—the great blow, which no time nor earthly care could heal.

What a contrast was the “hidden path” of him who sat beside her! The man who all his life had striven to screen his “better part” from the eyes and the hearts of his fellow men. And well had he succeeded. Who would have given him credit, when he sent that poor, broken-hearted creature from the chamber, where Death was about to claim his own—who would have given him

the due of possessing any feeling but the most harsh and arbitrary? And yet that he *had* better feelings has been shown. The wretched end of the youth entrusted to his care and guidance—his brother's legacy—did, as we have seen, “stir the depths within him.” Great had been his grief and his remorse. The latter feeling, too, had rekindled with renewed bitterness, after vainly endeavouring to dispel it by casting the aspersion of the immediate crime of the poor lad's death upon another hand than his own. But all these feelings had, during the last few weeks, given way before the all-engrossing one. His every thought had been centred on the one great subject of his life—*gold*. The absconding of his man of law had thrown his affairs into a very perplexed condition, and to extricate them from the entanglement into which they had fallen appeared to be no light matter. He had been, to use his own phrase, “regularly done, by the confounded rascal,” and Mr. Dewy, his new solicitor, was well-nigh “worn out in well-doing,” in seeking to

pacify the irritation and allay the ceaseless distrust and suspicion of his most troublesome, dissatisfied client, who declared repeatedly his determination "not to place confidence in any other law sucker." It required all the worthy Dewy's patience and forbearance to moisten the ground so parched by *Blight*. And it is not only the *law Blight* we would here signify ; we would call to mind the growth of a blight equally subtle, and as deadly in its consequences, which had been nourished in that screened heart, year by year from boyhood, ay ! and in boyhood too—if the Doctor could be said ever to have "been a boy"—certain it is he never displayed "the feelings of a boy"—those fresh, joyous sensations were never shown at least.

The screen was raised even against them, if they had birth at all, and no gushing spring of affection had at any time revealed their existence, save once—when his mother died. The evening after her burial he had been missing for long ; her grave was some distance from his father's house ; he was but

ten years of age, but he was found at night-fall lying beside it, drowned in tears. Oh ! why, why, did he dry them so hastily and turn from those who sought him, so scornfully and proudly—why did his cheek flush with mingled shame and anger—why should he have regarded with such disdain the best feelings of his nature ? Oh ! had that fountain, then opened so mercifully, but continued to flow, his heart would not have been now the warped, dried-up thing it seemed. And, reader, one great secret of all this was, “that he had no God save gold !” No ; although he would fain draw another screen before the eyes of those around him, he did not place it so effectually as the former one ; although he was so strict in attendance at church or chapel, whichever the case might be ; although he gabbled a prayer at morn and eve to the inmates of his household, men could pierce this screen which was not raised against the “ better part,” well knowing, that had he served his God as he would have had them believe, “ his light would have shone before them, and they would have seen his good works.”

He had only returned from London on the day previous ; he had been detained there, much against his inclination, above a week, in order to effect the purchase of a large house near St. James's ; he was already the owner of several thereabouts, and, as usual, "there was not such another thing in London as this last purchase." He had made the same remark with all, and would, doubtless, do so on any succeeding ones. That impudent puss, Rose Lindsay, declared, "It would be all the same were it only a cow-shed, with that boasting, bragging Doctor." We were going to say it was well, but perhaps it was not well, that he did not hear the opinion which very many beside Miss Lindsay entertained, albeit they did not trouble to express it.

But to return to that still chamber where he sat. He had been shocked when summoned to it the night before, immediately on his arrival home,—most shocked to see the alteration in its declining occupant, for a rapid change had indeed taken place, and, in a few hours, had the shade grown deeper

and deeper—the undeniable challenge, the stamp of Death!—Oh, linger yet awhile great Reaper!—Yes, he had been shocked, that stern, inflexible Doctor; he had been moved to tears, but none had seen them flow; he had (after divesting that beauteous blossom of her golden locks and administering what he considered necessary) gone to bed. And there, in his bed, he had remained till daybreak, fully satisfied that he had done his duty, and that there was nothing else to be done. He gave strict injunctions for the watchers to call him should that shade increase, but that he could be wanted by the side of the dying girl on any other matter than a medical one, he never once conceived; and, therefore, was he much startled at Eve's thrilling whisper, "Uncle, are you there?"

The curtain hid him from her view. He bent forward instantly, suddenly awakened from a reverie, in which, alas! the sad event of the passing hour had been utterly forgotten. So accustomed had he been to check the flow of tenderness — so long

cherished the habit of repulsing what he deemed mere human weakness—love, affection, sympathy — all these combined, all earth's gems, hallowed by a ray of heaven, had now but transient sway upon that heart, so woven in the mysteries of the worship of mammon. In an instant he was brought back, wrenched as it were from the pile of gold he had been collecting, to the recognition of the scene before him, to the knowledge of the trying time, and its fast approaching bitterness. He saw the shade had deepened,—the summons had been repeated ; yet in mercy did the Reaper for a while remain. The flood of golden light had now sought the little bed, and poured rich and full upon the fading blossom, lighting up “the face wan as marble,” and the eyes raised so fondly in their last brilliancy, yet did it not appear to impede their keen, searching gaze.

The Doctor moved towards the window, with the intention of drawing the blind ; but the dying girl said feebly, “Please leave it so—it is my *last sunset*.”

There was something in the voice so

solemn, although so faint and low, that it arrested the immediate attention of him who saw the crisis had indeed arrived. Death under any shape is terrible to contemplate, even when it takes its most beauteous form; and in the present case that last lingering look, so full of anxiety, inquiry, hope, and fear, sent the blood rushing back from the strong man's heart. There was even something of awe in his answering gaze, as he asked, "Should he call Aunt Rachel and Joan?"

But to his surprise Eve answered "No;" and then, with her eyes still fastened on his countenance, and evidently making a great effort to speak, she said, "Bend down—I want to tell you ——"

She stopped, as if unable to proceed, while he bent his head low that he might hear her. In trembling accents she went on. "*That letter*—that letter—you wrote to—to ——"

"O God! my child," broke in the Doctor, the memory of the past rushing in frantic bewilderment to his mind. "Do

not upbraid me, my Eve. O God! I have not only murdered *him*, but I ——”

“Stop!” interposed Eve, while she laid her transparent-looking hand upon the Doctor’s mouth. “*It did not go*—I sent *mine* instead.”

“Thank God! thank God!” ejaculated Thornton, while his head sank upon Eve’s breast, and he wept.

She laid her hand caressingly upon it, and in whispered tones continued, “I should have told you before, but I was afraid you would be angry because—because—you never loved poor Ralph. Oh, love his memory, dear uncle, for my sake. He has forgiven you for being too severe. I feel he has. I feel ——”

Her voice grew weaker, and her breath came in snatches now. He raised his head, and took her tiny hand in his, while he gazed with horror upon the life departing; and the face and form of her who had borne unto him that gentle child, did appear most vividly to his remembrance then. Surely some seraph had been sent with the phial of

love, sacred and undefined, there, to him with folded wings, and crowned head bowed reverently, while these two mortals drank; for Eve, with closed eyes, whispered, "*My mother!*"

A sob shook the Doctor's frame.

"Don't cry—don't cry. I can't look—I can't see you, dear uncle. Oh, how glorious! I see my mother—but I must leave her now. Oh! bless her—bless her! Let her come—let her come. Soon——"

These sentences were uttered with difficulty, and the last one was almost inaudible. For a few moments Thornton believed that all was over. He was blinded now with tears, and one fell upon the hand he held; it roused the expiring flame once more,—

"Don't cry, I am *very happy*. Oh! Ralph is there—it is all—all bright—all joy!"

"My child, you have blessed *your mother!* O Eve, my child, bless *me!*" gasped the Doctor, almost choked with his emotion.

"I do—I do ——" The last faint pressure of the hand relaxed; a sweet smile played around the lips, as they murmured,

“I do bless you, *my father!*” Another short pause, and with the words “My God, and my Great Father, I am thine!” the pure spirit flew from its fairy-like abode—its frail tenement—to the realms of bliss, its eternal home!

The sun had set; and the Doctor left the room where his weeping wife and old attendant sat. Joan had entered shortly after Eve expired; and had summoned there poor Aunt Rachel, who gave vent profusely to her pent-up grief. So violent it was, that she had not remarked the traces of tears on her husband’s cheek, as he stood by the window, with folded arms, contemplating the fair casket from whence the jewel had been claimed. Joan had, however; and, perhaps, it was the old woman’s earnest gaze which had recalled him to himself, and caused him hastily to retire to the privacy of his own room. And there once more we watch him as he sits. His countenance is stern again. That one look, which his tenacity has deemed prying, has raised the screen; but, forbidding as it appears, we

will peep behind it, and search his thoughts—for “thought” must tell upon “action.” Ah, yes! with all.—For behind the screen, behind the character we see of every man, there lies a secret history; and though it is so hidden that no human eye can pierce the mental current, ever flowing, still will it bear influence upon actions we may little understand, and too often misconstrue. It is like the soil which imparts nourishment to the vegetation which conceals it. Oh! many a deed which may thus fail to gain favour of short-sighted mortals, may reap Divine record with our God. But we return to our subject, our cold, calculating Doctor, from whose dealings we can as yet trace no such record. Yet, in the first throb of anguish which he did endure at the deathbed of his child, a violent impulse seized him, to gain, at all risks, a clue to the discovery of her mother, with a view to make reparation for any wrong that had been done; for that wrong had been done, and base deception practised, subsequent events had almost proved; yet there were only certain

times, few and far between, when he would, even in that hidden chamber of his being, admit this fact. And then he would murmur, "But what object could the villain have had? In separating us, he could not benefit himself." And whatever doubts he might have entertained as to the fate of her who had so loved and trusted, they were always swallowed up in the reflection, "that *his character was established*, and any slight dawning of the truth might debase him in the *eyes of society*." Yes, truly, he was looked up to as the wealthiest man in Doverton; and the humble residents there, together with old standing families in the village and its environs, considered his opinion worth that of any physician that London could boast of. So far his character was established; and those who knew only this outside of the intricate fabric, regarded it with much deference. Of the opinion of those who had witnessed more than that outside we need not speak, save that snatches of good had, at divers times, appeared strangely at variance with seeming

evil. Oh, the tangled web of the mind of man !

Well, long had our Doctor pondered, his high brow knitting and relaxing by turns ; his cheek flushing, and then becoming pallid ; his quick eye flashing, and then growing cutting in its coldness ; and his thoughts, after wandering in a long winding maze, must again have reverted to her whose opening beauty would soon be consigned to its dark resting-place for ever, but whose soul was now arrayed in the spotless garb of the angels of God—whose pitying glance may have then been turned below on him—that man of harrowing fears and constant struggles between right and wrong—the latter of which had been so fostered, and the former so *blighted*, that the battle was unfair and the balance undue ; and the affair altogether was one of blind device.

But the face we are watching had worked itself at last into a settled expression, and the owner of it arose from his arm-chair, into which he had frowningly thrown him-

self, and stood in his customary position before the fireplace, muttering, "No; it is better to leave it as it is."

And here we may glean a ray of that "better feeling"—that "hidden part." He had pondered and pondered till his brain had grown dizzy, upon circumstances past and present, and now he had come to the conviction, "that things must be left as they were." Yes; herein he studied the feelings of the dead—though no libel could reach her now. Still, could he endure his Eve looked down upon, as the world would call her, "the thing she was"? No! She had passed through her brief journey sweetly and at peace; beloved by all who knew her, even looked upon with a degree of reverence by many; in which feeling Miss Blue—that "pyramid of starch and consistency"—had even shared. And should he now be the cause of her degeneration in the eyes of these worldlings by revealing the secret of her birth? No! As she had been regarded while living so should she be remembered now that she had departed. Yes! this was a "ray

divine." And interwoven with the selfish satisfaction that "his character would still remain unstained," was another distant gleam of charity. Aunt Rachel—poor soul! what would she suffer, should the passages of the past be brought to present knowledge? He well knew that, good patient creature as she was, she had not that keen intellect which "perceives things unrevealed;" nor could she, like some few of her sex, unravel the flaws of nature, or, consequently, excuse them. Poor simple woman! The revelation would have been her death! This he felt. She must be kept in total ignorance. Her mind could not digest aught beyond the routine of her existence. That was its extent, and the walls closed around it.—Question: If those minds do not experience the most happiness? At all events they are free from many a gnawing doubt and poisoning care.

And, this weighty matter settled, again the Doctor recalled that "last long look of the dying." Again the large tear *would*

roll. Again he frowned at his weakness. Again he brought up to his mental vision the gentle love—the sweet, fond, yearning glance of Eve. The child of *his love*. His love? “Had he ever loved?” The question caused a rising of the throat—a choking sensation—a sob, and almost a groan. And then, in his strange impulsive nature, he threw himself once more into his chair, and said aloud, and bitterly, “Oh! all things are for the best; if she had lived to be trodden on, to be looked down upon, by a set of grovelling idiots! To be cast off by those who thought her all—all!” He ceased: passion now choked his utterance.

Truly he was right in the main, could he but have curbed his angry feelings upon that which might have been; but prithee, gentle reader, remember he was, as Eve had pronounced him in her last breath, *a father*. And, oh! had that frail blossom lived, well might he have trembled for the *blight*—“the *blight* of this world we journey in.” Truly, truly! oh! *most truly!*

“Not in cruelty, not in wrath, the ‘Reaper’ came that day;
’Twas an angel visited the green earth, and took the flower away.”

There, then, did “the father of the dead” sit pondering, and there for a time we must leave him.

Pale and overcome, not so much with journeying as with much thought, Miss Lindsay alighted at the door of Sea View House. She was met there by old Joan; the closed shutters had told the sad tale of “fading away,” and Rose fell upon the faithful breast of the old servant, and her tears fell free and unrestrained.

It was some minutes before utterance could be obtained by either party. At last Rose spoke: “I grieve I did not come before; O Joan! how unkind Eve, *dear* Eve, must have thought me!”

“She asked for you, poor darling, many times in the night; and when it was getting light I heard her say she had dreamt she saw you *caressing her mother*; but I don’t believe she had slept—it must have been a vision.

O Miss ! don't you think it would have been better to have told my master all that's happened ?”

“What good could it have done, Joan ? I am surprised at your question ; it could only have wrought great sorrow and remorse—which must come in God's own time.”

“Dear Miss Lindsay, I hope you'll excuse me, but really I'm so overdone by my darling's death I hardly know what I say or think. I only remember how she looked at that portrait all day yesterday, and when she heard him—the master—coming up the stairs, she whispered to me to hide it. Oh ! how bad she looked ; but she's beautiful now.”

A burst of weeping followed this speech, and, when it subsided, Joan asked numerous questions regarding the Lady Vernon ; to all of which Rose answered with the greatest caution, and yet with every appearance of perfect freedom. Poor girl ! it cost her a good deal to dissemble—for her nature was candour itself ; but, without swerving in the least degree from the truth, she effected

her design ; and Joan had not the remotest idea of any fresh turn in the momentous fate of the poor lunatic.

Weary was the night succeeding. If Eve had been Mrs. Thornton's own child, that lady could not have deplored her loss more ; and Miss Lindsay, who much shaken in nerve herself, nevertheless, strained all she possessed to comfort and console her, when morning dawned was fairly exhausted ; and several days elapsed ere she was equal to leave her room. Then there was the dreariest day of all—that of the funeral ; when that loved one was deposited in the common bed—the long, long home !—But we will hasten from this theme, lest the eye of the parent should grow dim—the fond mother :—

“ Who has given in tears and pain,
The flower she most did love ;
She knows she shall find it soon again
In those fields of light above.”

The father, upon whose knee the little firstling was for a brief space nestled close to his heart—beating with the strange thrill

of new affection, new joy, and yearning anticipation :—

“ Oh, forbear ! forbear !—

Ere sin could *blight*, or sorrow fade, death came with friendly care ;

The opening bud to heaven conveyed, and bade it blossom there.”

For more than a fortnight, Rose had been at Sea View, and the great pang there was beginning to subside. Aunt Rachel by degrees resumed her old habits of knitting, feeding the poultry, and busying herself with her aquarium, conservatory, &c., not unfrequently working in the garden, and, above all, visiting her poor neighbours, who were all much attached to the clever Doctor's lady—the “ good lady,” as she was called.

It was after one of these long rambles of charity that Rose returned with her aunt to Sea View, mounting the hill very leisurely, for they were both very tired and languid, the weather having set in excessively warm. Nature seemed to have burst forth into maturity without any youth that year, for already the summer flowers were in full

radiance, and the perfumed air was deliciously fragrant. In cheerful discourse the two ladies sauntered up the hill ; they were talking of Rose's mother ; she was a wonderful woman in her way, for with all her repeated attacks of illness, she was, nevertheless, "enjoyable and enjoying." And they were arguing how the "spirit carries the flesh" through its infirmities, and sometimes supports it almost against hope. The postman passed them, and Mrs. Thornton, whose mood appeared more cheerful than it had yet been since her bereavement, called him back, asking, in a jocular tone, "If he had any good news for Sea View." He immediately produced a letter directed to Miss Lindsay, bearing the Morley crest. Let it not be supposed that Rose had spent all this time at Doverton without hearing from her absent lover, as scarcely a day passed without a missive, until the Doctor was induced to exclaim against the "foolery of love-making;" but this letter was in a lady's handwriting, and was signed, "Gertrude Morley." It was to this effect:—

“MY DEAR MISS LINDSAY,—I think it my duty to write to you, as papa has written to your mamma. He has received a letter from Mr. Honourly (your uncle’s solicitor), acquainting him (by your uncle’s direction) of the fact that General Lindsay has transferred all his property (which appears immense) *from you to his new-found child*; which papa at first said he thought was not quite right, and mamma cried about; but I must say I agree with Mr. Honourly, who, in conclusion, remarks, ‘that this proceeding is but natural,’ and hints, ‘that you were very wrong in building so entirely upon wealth which could not, by any direct line, fall to your share,’ as it appears the General has other relations you have never heard of. Papa and mamma have had quite a quarrel about you; and I am sure you have too much kindness to prolong this state of affairs; as papa says, and so does Emily de Vere, that if you have any ‘proper feeling,’ you will release Ernest at once from his engagement, which, of course, was made under very different auspices. ‘Maidenly pride,’

Emily says, 'ought to come to your aid ; as all other pride is extinguished by this change of prospect in your career.' She has helped me to indite this letter, for really I was at a loss what to say to you. Papa has not seen Ernest yet ; I quite dread the explosion when he does, for Ernest is so ridiculously self-willed of late. However, 'hoping you will see things in their proper light,' (as Emily says) and free your 'poor bird' at once,

I remain,

Yours truly,

G. A. G. MORLEY."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at Rose Lindsay's feet the shock would scarcely have been greater than that produced by the contents of the above epistle. It was not only the purport of it, but the style in which it was addressed, "Yours truly," and "My dear Miss Lindsay." What had she done to merit this coldness—this difference of feeling in those whom she had known from childhood ? And had her uncle actually

"cut her off completely?" as she knew the Doctor would call it ironically ; and was this all the return she was to receive for her self-denial, and for feelings such brave, true hearts as hers can alone conceive ? Alas ! poor Rose, thy punishment is undeserved, at least so it would appear ; but we must all go through "the ordeal,"—all learn life's lesson, hard though it be, else would some of us love its charms too dearly.

"What is the matter, Rosey ? How pale you have turned ! You have walked too far ; lean on me"—were sentences kindly delivered by good, simple Aunt Rachel.

Rose placed her arm in the kind one extended, but did not speak ; she could not.

"Is that letter from home ?" asked Mrs. Thornton, looking anxiously at her niece's varying cheek, which burnt now with the vivid flush of wounded pride, and then paled with the stab of wounded affection, which shaft flew the deepest into her torn and bleeding heart.

"I must go home directly," said she, averting her face.

"Is anything wrong, child?" asked her aunt, uneasily.

"No—not much, aunty; only I don't think I ought to stay away from home so much," pleaded Rose, not knowing what to say in answer to Mrs. Thornton's enquiring looks.

"Isn't Sissy well?" asked the latter, not satisfied with Miss Lindsay's half answers.

"Oh, mamma is pretty well for her," replied Rose, trying to speak cheerfully; "it is nothing much, dear aunty. I'll tell you when you come to town, which you promise to do soon, you know. Don't talk about it till then, please."

The poor girl smiled through tears which would escape those long silken lashes; and good Aunt Rachel, presuming something was fresh in the lover world, knowing her niece to be a sad captivator, let the matter drop. . . .

"What shall I do!—oh, what shall I do!" was Rose's stifling cry upon her pillow that night.—Have we not, nearly all of us, raised that same cry in early life? "*What shall I do!*" Alas! the experience of our ripen

years tells too many of us that we could have done better ; but we should add to this assurance, "Not of ourselves." And out of the many who have poured forth that cry in apprehension, and maybe in corroding fear, how few have added, "Save me, or I sink !" And did Rose Lindsay echo that prayer now ? Yes ; she was one of "the few" fervent and trusting ; and with her whole heart she "committed her cause to God." And towards morning a peaceful sleep restored her much wounded and excited spirit to something like calmness.

We are not painting an angel in Rose Lindsay. It was not in her nature to be placid under oppression and injustice ; her spirit would rise, and its warmth was great. We do not exaggerate, perhaps, when we admit that it was as well for Miss Gertrude Morley that some distance intervened between her and the young lady in question ; for Rose's wrath in that direction shone in her eye, as something terrible, as she undressed that night. But with the morning came reaction (as the doctors have it), and

she could excuse in Gertrude much which had enraged her so deeply the night before. Yes; she could excuse much in her, for she pitied her trivial nature, and looked down with a feeling akin to contempt on one who would thus shun and disregard another for her loss of wealth; but our Rose had in possession a wealth "this world can never give nor ever take away," and it did support her in this trying hour. That she must give up, and for ever, him whose image was blended with every thought of her inmost soul, was a plain fact—a duty which stood in painful clearness before her. And bitter, most bitter, were the tears that knowledge produced; for Rose's love was not a transient beam which shines but for a moment, to be whirled into the vortex of the world, and then lost for ever. No; it was a ray from Heaven's own lamp, which does shine sometimes upon the tried heart of man—a ray to cheer his hours of trial, and to stimulate exertions which would, were it not for that bright, enduring light, sink into despair with the world's *blight*, and terminate in darkness. Great

was her agony, and, at first, passionate her grief. And the difficult part she sustained was the concealment of it.

She had hardly finished dressing, when Aunt Rachel tapped at her door, bearing in her hand a letter from Mrs. Lindsay. It was very short, and Rose could see by the handwriting the state of her mother's feelings, though it merely expressed a desire for her immediate return home, and that the brougham should meet the train due at half-past nine that evening.

Accordingly Rose, with a heavy heart, and a dull, weary load in her bosom, prepared for her solitary journey. The meeting between the mother and her disinherited child was most affecting, but it was marked by a strange contrast. Mrs. Lindsay, generally so calm, so averse to censure, was profuse in her exclamations of indignation against the "ungrateful conduct of the old General," while Rose scarcely spoke at all ; she, whose nature was "warmth itself," in this instance evinced a "coolness" which astonished and almost offended her justly angered mother ;

but poor Rose had "fizzed out all her wrath," as she quaintly expressed it, and now her pale cheek and sunken eye too plainly showed the more "deadly worm at work." She was very glad to seek the retirement of her own room against the continued invectives of her mother, who railed at the old man she had loved, and still did love in spite of all, with most sincere affection. Poor Mrs. Lindsay! when Rose had wished her "good night" with a white cheek and an eye tearless, but weighed down with woe, the mother gave free vent to her sorrow; it was natural, most natural; and yet she could but own that her daughter was right in the argument she had used, that "the General ought to leave his wealth to his own child; that as affairs had stood, he might have thought a little of her (the niece who had so loved him, and restored to him his child), but that they had 'no right' to expect even that." This was true in the main, but that "the ungrateful old man should forget all he had promised in his present selfish joy" was more than she could understand.

Not so Rose, who justly deemed such excessive joy might have played too keenly upon his aged frame; she, in her heart, never doubted but what "he would still leave her an annuity," but, at the same time, she fully determined "never to accept it." Here we are under the painful necessity of blaming "a favourite," perhaps, with "many."

Though some of our readers may deem Miss Lindsay "bold," and in some instances even "unmaidenly,"—and those who look upon actions in the jaundiced light of Miss Blue, of Doverton, most assuredly will—there are others, and we would hope "the many," who will see her as she is, and "truly judge her truthfulness." Vigorous-hearted and impulsive, she acted freely and unconstrained. When danger hovered hers was not the nature to shrink back in fear. As we have seen, she scorned that "timidity" which some of her sex think it lady-like and proper to maintain, while others have not the mental courage or power to overcome it; yet she was most perceptible of timidity of another kind. With those whom she knew

not—those whose natures were yet in mystery, and there are many whose whole lives remain so—she was nervous in the extreme; so open and candid herself, she could in no way comprehend deception or concealment in another. Yet genuine as she was, she had, as we have said, her faults: who is without them? She acted too much on impulse; and although no one thought more, at times “she hurried thought too much;” but her deeds have spoken for her—let them speak still.

Quarterly, every year came her uncle’s generous allowance for her clothes and “pin-money,” as he called it, but the sum was far more than she had ever needed, even to “dress handsomely,” as he had wished her. She had kept the brougham during the last year, for her mother, out of her savings, which were now quite exhausted: the late events on Doverton Beach had cost her not a little. And in the full confidence of having her need, in a work of charity or otherwise, from her doating uncle, she had not scrupled to spend all the ready

money she possessed hitherto ; so that Mrs. Lindsay's little income had not been much impoverished by her child.

It was strange that the day following Miss Lindsay's return home was that on which this donation was due. It came strictly to the time, as usual ; accompanied, too, by an unusually kind letter from Mr. Honourly, wherein he stated that he had, "according to the General's desire, forwarded extra notes to the amount of £100, with a request that that sum might be repeated, would Miss Lindsay only be kind enough to let him know, should it be required." He then went on to compliment her, in no measured terms, upon her "chivalrous conduct," as he jokingly termed it, in the "happy circumstances ;" and, after expressing his sympathy with the General, in the terrible calamity of his child, and his fear that "reason had fled for ever," he concluded, in a strain far warmer than he had ever used before.

To Rose's distressed feelings, in her present distraught imagination, this letter

appeared to be an "insult heaped on injury," and she burst into a flood of tears, which certainly partook now more of anger than any other feeling. And with "bitter impulse" she returned the banknotes and the letter to the writer, without a word of explanation or comment. Mrs. Lindsay, in her own mind, disapproved of this proceeding, for more reasons than one—her first being certainly well founded; for she feared and wondered how her daughter would bear to be reduced all at once to comparative penury. Her little property would ill suffice to enable them to procure the luxuries which, till now, they had enjoyed. She did not think so much of missing them herself, but Rose! the petted! the indulged! *the proclaimed heiress!*—whose every wish had been a law—who had but to give one look on what she desired! How would the poor child bear it?

Oh! fond mother, you do not know your child! who, even now, is thinking of "*your* consequent deprivations," and "how she shall endeavour to overcome them." Then

did Mrs. Lindsay fear for the effect of that day's action on the mind of the General, and she cast a despairing glance on the dim future, when she would be "no more;" and she blamed Rose most bitterly for her determination "to see Ernest Morley only once again, if he desired it," and with many tears besought her to break her resolution, feeling as convinced as her daughter that his love would remain unshaken. In vain she argued how "the course of true love never did run smooth," and how, "if even they were wed without Sir Edward's sanction, he would relent, and all would end well;" and "that Ernest was his own master, and could do as he chose," &c. It was all to no avail. Rose declared her surprise and displeasure at her mother's opinions as she had never done in her life before; and the first disagreement that had ever disturbed the quiet and repose of that little villa, now sent the poor inmates each to her own room chilled towards one another. But this state of things did not last long. Soon Rose flew to that gentle mother's breast, there to pour

out her heart—her poor wrung heart. And Mrs. Lindsay, in her turn, gave way to her daughter's opinion, which, upon reflection, appeared, though so bitter for the bearer, to be the best—" *That Ernest Morley and Rose Lindsay must separate for ever,*" for "she would never be able to look upon him with indifference." And, "that she would never be the cause of estrangement between father and son," she did most solemnly vow; or "bring down," as Gertrude or that father might call it, "disgrace upon their family." And so another day closed. Ernest had not been, and the head of the poor Rose was bowed low, for the "Blight" had begun.

CHAPTER IX.

Even then the griefs I now possess as natal boons were
given,

And the fair form of Happiness, which hovered round,
intent to bless,

Scared by the phantom of Distress, flew back to heaven !
Louis de Camoens.

“ Yet, though at times impetuous with emotion and
anguish long suppressed,

The swelling heart heaves, moaning like the ocean,
that cannot be at rest.

We will be patient, and assuage the feeling we may not
wholly stay ;

By silence sanctifying, not concealing, the grief that
must have way.”

DEEP grew the shadows on the old turrets
of Morley Court ; majestically, in the moon’s
silver light, waved the branches of those
noble trees, Time’s old standards. Strange

were the devices formed by the glittering beams of night's goddess, as they strayed stealthily around those ancient towers. All was silent, save the plaintive note of the nightingale. There was something sublime in the face of nature at that hour. The fantastic figures formed where "the light and shadow fell" on the grey stone of the time-worn mansion, and the perfect stillness which reigned around, gave one an almost indescribable feeling of "sweet, pensive melancholy,"—a feeling which caused the eye to fill, while the heart throbbed and the lips smiled in dreamy ecstasy—in silent adoration of Creation's beneficence, her spell of grandeur.

There was one, standing at the little wicket gate of the slight fence by the Rookery, who experienced this feeling to the full; whose heart still bounded in rapture, and whose kind old eye was brimfull with tears "such as angels shed."

"One could fancy the old hall deserted, and the bats and owls its only tenants," he

murmured, drawing forth his bandana, and wiping his still moist eyes. "What a riddle it all is! Dear me, what *can* it all mean?" he continued, slowly, his gaze fixed on the old Court. "What has come to the young people? They think, because I've found my child, and she, poor dear—ah! well—they think I've got all I want; and so they *cut* me." The bandana was again in request. "Dear me, dear me; who would have thought it? To think that Rosey should refuse the money; and then when I wrote to her, answer so coolly, 'she was thankful she could do without it'—Oh, dear!—and 'that she found so much to attend to that she can't spare time to come here—to *visit*,' as she calls it. Now, what can be up? And then he—he, too, to pass me with a bow—so cold—hardly a bow. O lor'! gracious! What is the world coming to?" Once more the bandana was pulled from the coat-pocket, and this time the old face was buried therein. The clock from the distant spire chimed the hour of eleven, and sadly the old soldier retraced his steps to his own abode,

murmuring in an undertone from time to time, "What is the world coming to?"

And silvery streaked the pale, beauteous rays on those old grey walls. They did look deserted outside, and not far different in aspect was the interior of that grand and massive building. "Silence and sadness was hanging over all."

To the eastern side, in deep shadow, the long windows of a spacious apartment were open; and on a small table, drawn into the recess of one, stood a richly-carved lamp, lighting up the bent head of a young man, whose full brown locks contrasted well with the white, well-shaped hand on which they rested. The further end of the long room was all in shade. There were lustres holding wax-candles on the broad mantelshelf, and branches for the same around the panelled walls; but the lights had been extinguished, and that of the solitary lamp alone remained.

So motionless was the figure who reclined beneath it—so silent all around—that one might well have imagined the elegant, finely-moulded form a counterfeit; but the illusion

was dispelled when the head was raised. It was the master of the mansion—the “monarch of all he surveyed.” Ernest Morley sat there, the wealthy and much loved, the worthy retainer of that noble heritage. But he was downcast and desolate! What was all that wealth to him? What were all his possessions but the mockery of his woe! He had hastened to the Villa the week before—to the home of his beloved—to welcome her back when he heard of her return from Doverton.

Rose had espied him, as he hastened, with a flushed cheek and a joyous eye, to greet her. She had rushed up stairs to her mother’s room ere the door was opened, and with a blanched cheek, but firm, unflinching voice, had said, “Dear mother, he is here! Tell him all, if he knows nothing, which I expect is the case, from his look; and tell him, as we agreed, that these trials are ordained by God, and it is our duty to submit in humility to his decree, whatever it may be.” Her voice faltered, and Mrs. Lindsay’s eye of anxiety overflowed.

"Will you not see him this once, Rosey?" she asked.

"No, dear mother; it is better not. It can do no good, and will only wrench my heart, which is already ——" A deep sob checked the poor girl's utterance, although she, with a violent effort, restrained her tears.

"But may I not still let him cherish hope, poor fellow! For instance, if in the course of time his father were to relent—I mean," she quickly added, noting the red blood spreading in Rose's cheek—"if Sir Edward were to die—if ——"

"Never!" exclaimed the excited girl, with vehemence. "His son shall never wed me!—*Rose Lindsay's a beggar!*"

Mrs. Lindsay went tearfully upon her errand, and Rose, locking the door, knelt by her mother's bed, and prayed for "strength according to the day."

A quarter of an hour had elapsed, and then there was a gentle tap. It was Mrs. Lindsay's voice which spoke:

"Rose!"

"Yes, mamma!"

"He will not go without seeing you; he is distracted. You *must* see him."

"No, mamma; what good can it do? It will not make him any less so, and will only try us both more—more than we can bear."

"But he says, Rose, you cannot love him as he believed, to give him up because his father refuses his consent. He is dreadfully enraged against his father: I don't know what the consequences will be. I think you had better just see him for a moment."

"It can do no good; I cannot alter the feelings of Sir Edward Morley, or my own," said Rose, with a burst of uncontrollable emotion. "He cannot mean that he does not believe my love. Alas! would to God I did not love him so well! But *I will never separate the father and the son — never!*"

"You *have* eternally, by thus casting me off!" cried the anguished voice of her lover, as he appeared suddenly in the doorway. "Can you believe my love, Rose, if you think I could ever tolerate the presence of

him who has been the cause of this cruel, this unbearable affliction ?”

Ernest Morley’s eyes started, and his usually tranquil countenance was frantic in its workings, and terrible to behold. Rose sank upon the little couch, terrified at his sudden appearance and violent manner ; pale as death she met his glance of mingled anger and entreaty, with one of equal agony.

Mrs. Lindsay, weeping, left the room ; and Morley, falling upon his knees, laid his head on Rose’s lap, and wept too, like a child. She stooped down and kissed those locks we are now regarding, fondly. He used every argument, every persuasion, but in vain. She would not relent. “No ; he should never wed a *beggar*, when he had courted an *heiress* ! Never by her disgrace the name, the *proud name* he bore, by sharing it with poor Rose Lindsay, the *cast-off and disinherited* !”

He grew angry again ; again he wept, and he pleaded ; but the wide, open wound in Rose’s heart was still fresh and bleeding, and it felt like to canker as it closed, chang-

ing her very nature. Verily had *Blight* begun its deadly work. . . .

And now we return to the old court, where sat the son whom God did love and chasten. He had sought his father immediately after leaving the Villa—that day we have recorded, and a fearful scene had passed ; for it is a fearful spectacle, *the alienation of a father and his child*, the withdrawal of affection from hearts united by nature's holiest bond, the seed of animosity sown on ground which should be sacred from earth's noxious weeds. He had seen his mother, his cherished mother, on her knees in his behalf !—he had witnessed his father give way before the humiliation of the wife, whose wishes had ever been his first law ; and, after holding to his heart that sweet, gentle guardian of his childhood, he had departed in haste from the roof which covered the father whom he no longer loved or respected as of yore ; and he sat now ruminating on these dark days, which, we are told to remember, “shall be many.” He had written to his lost, yet treasured mistress, a letter of heart-pouring anguish and urgent

entreaty; and one in answer to his appeal lay open before him. It was as follows:—

“MY DEAREST ERNEST,—I received your letter this morning, and I am pained by its contents. I had hoped and judged you would have borne affliction with more fortitude; you have so often, and so kindly, and effectually endeavoured to convince others of its good effects. I must remind you of your own counsel, when that poor girl, residing in a green lane, near dear old Teevesdale, lost her lover at sea.—When nearly wild with grief, do you remember what you told her?—‘That adversity should be hallowed by the knowledge that God is in everything; that the believer should lose his own will in that of his Great Father and Director; he would then follow the path prepared for him in faith and resignation; at God’s bidding he would pitch his tent, and at His bidding also strike for march; that each providence has a voice, if we could only hear it—a fingerpost pointing us to the right way, that we may go to the city of habitation.’ Providence, dear Ernest,

may seem dark, indeed, to our troubled view, merging into the shades of night; but, oh! let us bear in mind the 'silver lining to the cloud'—that we shall, 'through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of heaven.' We shall find these heavy clouds fraught with rich blessings then. We have loved each other too much, more than we have loved God; we have forgotten the Creator in the creature, and we have leant too much upon the arm of flesh. Let us trust in Him with whom, as you say in yours of this morning, 'all things are even possible;' in Him who has said, 'I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee.' And then, in his own good time, we may be able both to own that 'it is well,' and trusting that 'at evening time there may be light.' 'In the shadow of his wings will we rejoice.'

Your devoted friend,

"ROSE LINDSAY."

In his bitter disappointment, Ernest Morley had shunned the eyes of his fellow-men. He had sought and found solace, in his deep

affliction, in the dear old home of his boyhood, though desolate now, save for the old domestics, who regarded him with awe mingled with their reverence; for his kind, gay smile, and sympathetic air, had departed, and sternly he sat or wandered, in his great sorrow, stately as those majestic trees, the rich woods and groves of his noble domain. Friends, and he possessed many, far and near, had made efforts to intrude upon his solitude, but he had been refused to all. Since his arrival at the Court he had not passed its precincts, not even to ride his favourite mare; but he had sauntered forth at sunset, like one lost to the world and to himself. Once, and once only, in emerging from a green winding, a chosen path of her he loved, he had come suddenly upon the old General on the boundary of his park; but from the outstretched hand and friendly greeting he had turned with ill-concealed disgust, and with a frigid bow he had passed on.

And thus months elapsed; six, seven, eight, went by, with dull, dreary monotony.

And again we see him seated in that same apartment; but this time not alone. Colonel I——, of the 78th Regiment, is his companion, and they are engaged in eager conversation for more than two hours. Then the visitor takes his leave; and we may discover the subject of their discourse, by Ernest's soliloquy, as he sallies forth upon his evening ramble. "So then all is over! and the golden dream at an end for ever! Truly, is man but a thing of nought; his life a dream, which is seldom, if ever, realized. Truly, he is "altogether vanity;" as the flower of the field he is cut down and withered. Oh, Rose, Rose, you are cruel in your wisdom. Poor Rosey! when you hear that I have fallen, which God grant I may soon—very soon—for what is the valour of *murder*? What the renown of the blood-stained warrior at the judgment-seat of the Almighty? Great perhaps; *great in a good cause such as this*. But, oh! the sacrifice of life, such as it might have been!—the peace, the joy, *the valour of doing good*, to the little band committed to one's care. The

rich reward to the soldier of God's own warfare. The love of—oh! Rose ——”

“Why, what is all this about?” cried a voice close by, and issuing from the plantation, which there divided the lands of Morley from those of Teevesdale, stood Mr. Honourly, the friend and solicitor of General Lindsay. “Excuse me, my young friend, but I am my noble old client's deputy, and was about making you a rather late visit, for I see,” he added, pulling out his watch, “it is past eight o'clock.”

Morley had started with a look of haughty enquiry at the first appearance and remark of the stranger; for stranger he deemed him in his present mood, having only met the worthy man of law at various times when he had dined in past happy days at the Park. But the tone and manner, together with the bright, honest eye and open brow of the new comer, were not such as to engender any malevolent or unpleasant feeling in the breast of another; he was past middle age, and had the deportment of one at peace with himself and the world.

As Ernest remained silent, uncertain how to act towards the man whose pen, at least, had wrought so much misery, the latter, holding out his hand, continued, "I will still pay you my call, if agreeable, according to the General's wish."

"I know not," said Morley, faining not to observe the other's movement, "what business General Lindsay can have to transact with me, or to what cause I am indebted for this intrusion upon my privacy;" his cheek reddening, as he recalled the first sentence of the intruder.

"Nay, nay, do not be angry," said Honourly, quickly. "You have been angry long enough with the poor old man, who is breaking his heart at the desertion of his young friends." A tear moistened the bright eye of the speaker.

"Indeed!" was Ernest's cold reply.

"And I have come," proceeded the other, "to enquire the reason of this estrangement; not only as regards the old General himself; but he has heard this last week that you are thinking of going abroad, into the army, and

he fears there is something amiss between you and his niece—who I must say (pardon me) has neglected her fond old uncle, refusing his assistance in a way which neither he nor I can understand.”

“Hold!” cried Morley, who had stood, with indignant eye and expanded nostril, like a spirited horse, goaded by the spur, and ready to overthrow his rider. “Can you possibly dare to come here to insult me by these remarks? You, whose vile pen—excuse me, you have called forth this—but I should rather say, you, whose *servile pen* has been the instrument of displaying the basest ingratitude! But enough of this—enough! Man’s wealth is his own, and by his actions it is sometimes *cursed*!”

“I must now cry, Hold! in my turn,” broke in the much astounded lawyer, whose amazement at this outburst stood upon his visage full and undisguised; he had stared in alarm at the young man during his excited speech, almost fearing that his senses had taken leave of him. “Why, what is all this? What have I written of ingratitude

of one whose gratitude knows no bounds ? and whose natural sorrow and bitter complaint is, that he is repulsed by those on whom he would lavish it to his dying day, and to whom the bestowal of his whole fortune, handsome as it is, can but ill compensate for their deed of mercy."

It was now Morley's turn to stare in utter bewilderment. "Did you not write to my father?" he at length exclaimed.

"*I* write to your father?—never!" was the astonished reply.

"Then there has been some hellish work!" was Ernest's excited speech.

He then related all that had occurred with regard to the letter received by Sir Edward Morley. At the relation of its contents, Mr. Honourly expressed much grief that he (Ernest), although not intimately associated with himself, had not formed a higher opinion of his character and feelings, than to suppose him capable of penning so heartless a document.

To this Morley replied, that both he and Miss Lindsay had supposed that it had been

written from the dictation of the General, who, in the elation of his new-found happiness, had wished to annul all other claims upon his property ; and bitterly did he now feel and own they had wronged the generous and warm-hearted veteran, who, Honourly stated, had declared "his will" should remain the same ; his niece, Rose, remaining his "sole heiress," well knowing how she and Morley would ever protect and cherish his child, should she survive him, which, the worthy man went on to observe, he did not think unlikely now, for the events of the past year had told greatly upon his once hardy frame.

"It has told on many," said Ernest, with a deep sigh of strange conflicting emotion, as he returned the wringing of Honourly's hand.

That same evening, a most puzzled, but happy and united trio, sat in the long apartment of Morley Court, where no longer the solitary lamp was burning. Light was the room, and lighter still the hearts and eyes that it contained, though ever and anon the

latter—those of the old General in particular—were dim with excess of feeling and thankfulness. Morley's heart was frequently raised in prayer and praise to Him who had wrought this change, commanding the overwhelming waters to "Be still."

Great was the perplexity of all regarding the letter, and Mr. Honourly expressed his desire to accompany Ernest (who could hardly be prevented starting off that night) on the morrow, to the seat of Sir Edward Morley, that immediate endeavours might be made to trace and punish the writer. Who that could be, or for what purpose it could have been written, no one of the three could divine ; and the old General at length surmised a fear that Mrs. Bertram (whom he still kept as attendant to his idiot child) might have been playing with some colleagues a foul and treacherous part. In this opinion his two companions slightly shared, imagining that the plotters of the conspiracy may have been too ignorant to have seen the fallacy of such a scheme.

But when his visitors had departed, and

Ernest Morley, with a full heart, had once more thanked his God for the mercy of the past day, and sat down to write a hasty note to his own loved one, that she, too, might cast off her burthen and glorify the Great Giver, he pondered well what had taken place. The slight suspicion, held for a moment towards the woman Bertram, disappeared from his mind, and one of a darker and far more deadly and mysterious nature took possession there. But, whether that suspicion was justly founded, we must leave the sequel to reveal ; and, in the mean time, we must beg the reader to accompany us backward for a short space in this history, to about three months before the circumstance we have just related had occurred.

It was a gloomy afternoon ; there had been a thunder-storm in the early morning, and, from the appearance of the heavens, their anger was not over yet. Large black masses of clouds floated in threatening array, and, at long intervals, a rumbling peal might be heard, and a flash of lightning seen far over the sea, in token of challenge.

A small craft neared the strand, and from it sprang two stalwart mariners. One took his way along the rough beach, while the other climbed the cliff's craggy side, and made for Gin Way.

"I long to see my mother," he said, aloud, though none were by to hear. His eye moistened, reckless as was his gait, and hardened his countenance (though more from weather and circumstance than from work within). His lip trembled as he repeated his desire, and he hastened on.

It was Dick Harding, the sailor, the "beggar of the highway," and Rose Lindsay's preserver, whom we now behold. He reached the crazy abode where he had left all he loved on earth. His mother, as the reader remembers, was turned from her dwelling on a dark cold night; as he may also remember Ernest Morley had aided and befriended her—and he had continued so to do, by means of his old tutor, Mr. Greenhill, till death released her, which it had soon done. The shock had proved too great upon her aged and infirm frame.

The sailor listened to the tale, with death-like cheek and glaring eye, and then betook him to the "Gull." The master, Dacey, was from home. What passed between Dick Harding and the woman Dacey we know not; but he issued from the "Gull," an hour after he had entered it, with a set air and determined visage. He made his way to the beach, and there roamed till the moon should have risen; but she tremblingly hid her light. Another figure joined him then; and, twenty minutes afterwards, the sailor had re-entered the "Gull," *alone*; there he had rested till break of day, and then had re-embarked in his wave-tossed bark again.

On that same night, in her little bedroom at the Villa, Rose Lindsay might have been seen seated, pen in hand, leaning over a desk (her cheek as white as the wrapper which enfolded her lovely form), although past midnight.

"*What shall I do?*" is again the question which falls from her quivering lips. "What shall I do? They say they will publish the work if I will share in the ex-

penses of publication. They want me to forward fifty pounds. Alas! where am I to get it? I am sure it will take, and amply repay me (poor Rose Lindsay! it was her first work)—amply repay me. And then—oh, how glorious!—I shall be able to get those little things dear mamma is deprived of now—those small comforts; oh! they are the ‘poetry of life.’ But how ever shall I obtain fifty pounds? I would offer interest on the loan, could I only get it. Let me see ——.”

She laid her arms upon her desk, and bent her head upon them. She thought of an old lady, a friend of her mother’s; but, somehow or other, she shrank from asking aid from one of her own sex in this matter. Then she raised her head suddenly; a bright thought appeared to strike her, for she exclaimed, “Yes, I think he would do it, strangely prejudiced and disagreeable as he is.”

Her mind reverted to Dr. Thornton, and she recalled to it those few shadowy glimpses of the better part which marked his charac-

ter, and in so doing she dwelt too much upon their inference, forgetting that long habit of repulsion had served to weaken its power, and strengthen the counteracting influences. She paused a little in uncomfortable meditation of the nasty speeches she had heard he made in reference to her disinheritance: "that such a reverse served people right who looked to tread in dead men's shoes;" "that the disappointment of wealth might be profitable in counteracting Miss Lindsay's self-confidence, and teach her not to place such implicit trust in an old dotard, who would probably pick up some other woman before he died, and practise another cheat upon the fool he now had." *How little did he reckon who that fool was!*

Well, this reverie of Miss Lindsay's ended in her taking a sheet of note-paper from her desk and, late as was the hour, she commenced writing to the Doctor. Again she paused and hesitated, but then she called to mind another instance of the "better part." Surely there is some angel employed to link the

invisible chains of "thought" and "action." She called to mind the "beggar of the highway," and the Doctor's charity, and link was placed in link till vividly shone in her remembrance all that was connected with that poor sailor; his protection of herself upon the beach on the momentous night of the rescue; and the anecdote which Morley had related to her, of his miserable old mother, and her subsequent death; and she murmured aloud, "I wonder if I shall ever see that poor man or hear of him again." And at that same moment the sailor was blessing her lover's name, coupled with her own, far out upon the foaming sea. He thought of the deed of charity towards himself, and that of "great worth" towards his mother; and, as the billows rose and the wind roared around him, he called to the God above to repay them both with His love. Yes; *he* called, whose hands were then red with blood.

The reply Miss Lindsay received from the Doctor, in answer to her request, was, as the reader may imagine, to the following effect:—

“MY DEAR ROSE,—I am extremely sorry you have written to me respecting the publication of your new work, which you say ‘has cost you so much labour and study,’ because I cannot comply with your request, for the following reasons:—First, I have pressing claims for positive necessities upon me. Secondly, Success might encourage perseverance in a course which I detest, and would far rather subscribe to the suppression than the publication of novels, or any work of the kind. And, thirdly, I consider that a young person in your situation might employ her time in a far more rational and useful manner than in the writing of them. I fear you will be annoyed by this reply to your request, but as the sentiments are sincere, you must give me credit for them; and, with love to your mother and self,

I am,

Yours affectionately,

T. M. THORNTON.”

Rose’s cheek burnt as she perused this epistle, as she well knew he had intended it

to do. "Insulting !" she exclaimed, tearing it to shreds. "To style himself, 'Yours affectionately,' when he is hugging the knowledge of the torture he inflicts. Narrow-minded, contemptible man ! *You scorn fiction ! No wonder ! for fiction does, indeed, scorn you — the hero of a truth so hideous !*"

Rose was heated when her angry words escaped her, perhaps excusably, for with time came reflection, and her wrath cooling down she muttered, "Poor man ! he may yet see his folly ; it will be hard at the close of life, when it is too late to mend."

And so time dragged heavily on ; and the only circumstance which occurred to break the monotony of Rose Lindsay's cheerless life, was a letter she received from her old admirer, Captain Riggin. He wrote in a plain genuine style, which he knew would be the nearest way to reach the reader's heart ; repeating the offer he had made her when the heiress of Teevesdale, and begging her to pause ere she finally refused his long-wished-for happiness, to prove his disinter-

ested affection ; of which Rose keenly felt the truth. She wrote a beautiful letter in reply, of warm heartfelt thanks and steadfast refusal ; deeply grieved to be the cause of pain and disappointment to one whom she had, in earlier days, too harshly judged. It is delicious, when one's cup of sorrow is full, and their lot made desolate, to find one drop of healing balm in pure "sincerity;" for it is a plant most choice and rare.

Thus we arrive at the period when the letter we have watched being written in Morley Court duly arrived at its destination, and sent the receiver of it into a paroxysm of wild and dizzy joy, soon to soothe into that "calm" known only to the mortal who has fought, unflinchingly, under the Almighty Banner.

CHAPTER X.

“ We have been patient—and a glorious mediation
Has yielded us in mercy a rich harvest from above ;
We have been faithful—and, with endless adoration,
We will join the band of angels in praises for His love.”

“ And the Spirit of Peace her wing shall wave,
And pardon proclaim o’er the mariner’s grave.”

THREE days after the coming of these good tidings, Ernest Morley, accompanied by the General and Mr. Honourly, arrived at the Villa, and Rose was once more folded to the throbbing bosom of her lover, and locked in the arms of her dear old uncle, the sight of whose altered appearance and trembling limbs fell heavily on her heart. Ernest put into her hand a long letter from

his mother, enclosing a short one from the Baronet, wherein he begged Miss Lindsay "to '*forget the past*,' and restore his son to happiness." With the latter request Rose intended instantly to comply; but it was not quite so easy to adhere to the former. Forgiving as was her nature, it was a difficult matter to cast from remembrance what Lady Morley excusingly called the "ancestral pride of Sir Edward." Nevertheless, she succumbed to the wishes of those around her, and promised to accept the pressing invitation she had received to visit her ever dear friend and future mother-in-law, before taking up her old quarters at Teevesdale Park, which the old General said "he was dying for her to do." And then commenced a most eager discussion relative to the mysterious letter, the herald of so much woe.

"Who could have committed such a cruel forgery, and for what purpose could it have been done?" asked Mrs. Lindsay.

"That is the question, dear madam," remarked the General, with a touch of his wonted jocularitv. And then, in a changed

tone, he resumed, "If above ground, he must be found, Ernest ; and," striking his fist emphatically on the table, to the terror of Mrs. Lindsay, whose best wine-glasses were thereon, "he shall be punished to the utmost rigour of the law."

"He shall," was Morley's reply, who stood, his arm encircling Rose's waist, his eyes fixed musingly on the floor, and his fine countenance expressive of much perplexity.

Rose looked up into his face as he made the above laconic answer, while Mr. Honourly observed, "The difficulty lay in proving the handwriting ; that no one as yet could recognize it, and in all probability it had been written by another party than the one who sent it," &c.

"Have you left the letter with your father?" asked Rose, who still watched the quiet working of Morley's features ; a feeling the while, dim, shadowy, and undefined, stealing over her.

"No, darling," he said, rousing from his

reverie. "Honourly, you have it here, or at the office?"

"I gave it to you, my friend, this morning," replied that gentleman.

"So you did; that's lucky, though I'm afraid it's of no use." Ernest produced the missive as he spoke; and Rose, walking to the window, for it was growing dusk, regarded it attentively for some moments.

"My God!" she exclaimed at length. "This writing is disguised, but I am almost sure *it is the hand of Blight!*"

A cry of surprise burst from all around, save Morley, who said, while his very lips whitened, "Then mine is no idle fancy. I know not his handwriting, but I have had a strange and powerful conviction that that villain is at the bottom of this foul affair."

"But, good gracious me!" cried Mrs. Lindsay, "why should he have committed this act? He bore no enmity to you or my girl, nor did he know any reason for so doing. He could not have gained a

knowledge of how you aided the deliverance of the General's poor child, surely."

"God only knows," said Morley, "but this I swear, that I will not give up the chase until I find his lair, and hunt him out to broad daylight and justice!"

"Ah!" said the old General, "right, right! let no expense be spared. If I were a little younger, I would accompany you, and I should be in too much of a hurry to wait for the law; I should take it into my own hands if I found him, and grind him, I'm afraid, to powder!"

Rose had left the room a few minutes before; she now returned with an old envelope directed to Dr. Thornton by the lawyer, which had been conveyed from Doverton to the Villa, as a receptacle for some choice seeds, a long while back, and which she had now gladly found. The writing was compared minutely, and not a doubt existed in the minds of one of those present but that the same hand had penned the characters on each paper. And now the wonder was, what cause had prompted so vile an act.

"It is slight in crime to acts that man has committed," remarked Morley; "and it is my firm opinion that we shall yet find in him the murderer of poor Ralph."

"Let no expense be spared, Ernest," again urged the General.

"Depend upon it, there shall not be, nor trouble either, sir," Ernest replied.

Rose glanced wistfully at her restored treasure. "But you will not seek for the dreadful man alone?"

"Alone! no, I should think not," broke in the General. "He ought to take two detective officers with him at least, and when he catches the villain he should make those sprightly officials play at ball with him, rewarding them handsomely for each bruise the sneaking miscreant gets."

"What can he have meddled with my child for?—*that* is what I cannot understand," again observed Mrs. Lindsay.

"My dear lady," said the old General, making his most winning bow, and giving an arch glance with the still bright eye, in which the joyous light was dancing as of

yore, "must I remind you of the nature of the destroying insect? Can you be surprised that *Blight* should not leave a *Rose* alone?"

It was Morley's intention to set off on the morrow on his proposed expedition. Making first for the "Gull," where a bribe would be offered to the inmates for the clue he felt certain they possessed; if he could not gain this by peaceable means, he was advised by Mr. Honourly instantly to resort to stronger, and call the law to his aid.

A merry evening was that passed at the Villa. "Come, Ernest, drown all care, man," cried the General. "Let us banish grief; I declare my face has grown long during the past year; I almost despair of pulling it up again to its natural proportions. 'Let bygones be bygones,' is an ancient adage, and a jolly true one. What there may be in embryo of the unpleasant kind, let us chase for the moment away, with a full determination to fight valiantly in our own good cause, when the time arrives for so doing. Now, for this evening I 'banish the past,' and I'll give myself a rich treat of the present, fully

agreeing with the divine proverb—‘Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.’ ”

The old man rose from his seat next Mrs. Lindsay, and greatly to that lady’s consternation and temporary dismay, and much to the amusement of those around, he caught her in his arms, and after kissing her cheek with much heartiness, whirled her vigorously round the room, humming gleefully the old, forsaken “Waltz Tune” of his long-passed boyhood.

Rose and Morley were not long in following the veteran’s example; and Honourly, joining his rich tenor voice with the General’s full bassoon, a very good accompaniment was afforded, till the latter, sinking on to the couch, and dragging his partner with him (who was yet all astonishment), declared himself growing old, for he was “perfectly winded.” Hearty was the laugh at the expense of the old soldier, and from time to time that mirth echoed with equal gladness. Great was the sunshine of felicity where the dark gloom of despondency had reigned so long.

And now we must turn once more to a darker page, in order to trace the trail of the "Blaster," and divulge the fate of the "feeder on human woe."

It was drawing towards the close of day when Ernest Morley arrived at M——, taking with him a detective, according to Rose's earnest desire—who felt much, and, perhaps, excusable horror, in the idea of his visit to the lonely "Gull." He had promised to write that night, if possible, that his safety might be known ; but he had inwardly determined not to return to those he loved until he should have effected the object of his search. Morley sojourned at the hotel, to partake of a slight repast, before proceeding to the village of Doverton. He had always a kind word for everybody, and as the waiter prepared the table for his hasty meal, he asked, carelessly, "If there was any news thereabouts, anything fresh since his last visit?"

"Well, there's been a regular kick-up, sir, here a few weeks ago," replied the obsequious waiter. "People say that what's

happened will be all for the best; for the coast will be better guarded for the future."

"Indeed!" was Morley's reply. "Anything to do with plunderers?"

"Oh, lor' yes, sir! Mayhap you've never heard of a miserable, witch-like sort of a place called Black Rock?"

"Oh, yes! I know it."

"Did you ever happen to hear—I don't suppose you could ever see it, it was so hidden, they say, in the rocks—of a wretched tavern? but what was, in fact, a haunt for smugglers."

"Oh, yes—yes! I know it well. What of it?"

The waiter stared at his interrogator; who had been taken off his guard by his intense desire to hear all the informer might have to state.

"I remember passing it once," put in Morley. "A horrid place, wasn't it?"

"It was indeed, sir! the plunder that's been found in the caves underneath it is past all knowledge, they say."

"But how came they to find it?" broke

in Ernest, impatiently. "Was the man Da——?—was he found out, or what?"

Again the waiter regarded the gentleman with some surprise.

"I had occasion once in a storm to take shelter in that place," remarked Ernest, observing the other's look of scrutiny.

"Lor', sir! I wonder you wasn't afraid," was the genuine answer of the attendant. "Well, there will be no more danger of it," he continued, "anyhow; they say it's only a blackened ruin now."

"A blackened ruin?" cried Morley.

"Yes, sir, blown up by gunpowder! And the value of the articles——"

"But what of the people in it—the man and his wife?" interrupted Morley.

"They were all blown up, sir, every one! except a boy, that they did think had done it; but he firmly denies it, and I should not think he would now, if he was guilty—for they say he is so like a cinder, he can't live. Jem, our porter, said he was dead, but I heard he is still alive this morning."

"Were there any other poor souls in it, besides the man and his wife, as you say 'every one in it'?" asked Ernest, almost breathless with this astounding information.

"There was one other body, and some bones were found in the cave; the boy says the body was that of an old man, who had lived there some years, long before he was taken there."

Morley called to mind the decrepid, unearthly-looking blind man who had been a subject of so much pity and interest with Miss Lindsay. He shuddered at the contemplation of this terrible recital, as he enquired, "If the waiter knew where the boy then was?" He was told that he had been taken to the little library of the village after being discovered in his sad condition, but whether now removed from there or not his informant did not know.

Accordingly, Ernest made the best of his way to the little shop in which we met the artist, Ralph Thornton, on the evening of the opening of our tale. He was surprised to perceive his old tutor's carriage standing at the door,

knowing how infirm he was becoming, and how seldom he ventured out in the evening air. The master of the shop knew Morley very well ; and, in answer to his enquiries, stated that the "lad was going fast, and had petitioned to see a clergyman ; that, on Mr. Greenhill hearing of his desire, he had himself visited him now for the second time."

He then called his wife to show Mr. Morley up to the room in which his reverend tutor was seated, by the side of the lad whom the reader may remember as sleeping on the barrels in the cavern of the "Gull." An affectionate greeting passed between the friends, and then Morley was given to understand, what surprised him not a little, that the "Old Bat," as he had been called by the woman Dacey, and was still termed by the dying youth, was the *father of Blight* ! This was told in strict confidence, the boy seeming to dread lest any part of his confession should be revealed.

No one outside that abode of infamy had known of the old being's existence, whose

former crimes had in part reached the ears of the narrator, and whose present relation of them filled the listeners with horror. It was in vain Morley questioned regarding the son of that miserable creature, the dastardly "Blight," which had fallen upon him and his; the boy maintained a strict denial of any knowledge of that "reptile's" movements, merely observing, "that he did not think he was in England."

Both his auditors imagined they could perceive a slight hesitation in his manner as they pressed him on this subject; and Mr. Greenhill kindly and gently reminded him of "God's pardon to all those who confessed with the pure spirit of truth, and repented."

"I've nothing to repent of in that matter, sir," answered the lad; "other people's crimes are not mine, and it is not for such as me to peach of them."

"We do not want you to speak of his crimes," said Morley. "If we have not yet proved them, they stand too clearly to our understanding."

"I was not speaking—I did not mean

him," stammered the boy, a faint flush dawning on his sunken cheek. "I will tell you so far—I know some one who *can* tell you where he is."

"Who is that?" asked Ernest.

"Dick Harding; he's a sailor."

"I know—at least I suppose him to be the husband of the poor old woman who was turned from her dwelling one night last winter; perhaps you did not hear of that?" interrupted Morley.

"Indeed I did. It's her son; he's in America. He's the only one who knows all about him."

So far, then, Morley had gained a clue, though but a very slight one, as to the whereabouts of the traitor. In his opinion his tutor coincided, that it was most probable the lawyer had taken flight with Harding after sending the forged letter to its destination; and, in that case, Ernest wondered much how any man could bear the companionship of one whose brutal conduct had caused the death of his mother!

In answer to a remark he made of this

kind, Mr. Greenhill observed, "It was but too plain a proof how 'one villain makes more.'" He little imagined to what an extent, in this instance, his quotation could be carried.

With much difficulty the boy was at length induced to acknowledge that part of the New World in which he believed the sailor had purposed sojourning; and in the course of a few days Ernest Morley set sail, and in due time landed at that port where, in a less space of time than two years before, he had held fellowship with him who, in the early flush of manhood, had cherished bright hopes and golden dreams, the chill remembrance of whose young life extinguished—the mysterious close of his brief career—propelled his ardour and buoyed him up in a cause which for many months proved fruitless.

Sacrificing every personal feeling, he entered into scenes of vice and depravity—mixing in the lowest grade, with the craving hope of meeting one of the twain he sought. He arose early, and retired late, filled with

the satiety of wreaking just punishment on the author of such deep injury ; and in this corroding anxiety he did in part forget the Voice which hath spoken, "Vengeance is mine—I will repay."

Five long months had passed away, and still Ernest was an exile. He began to feel worn out with his wanderings, and sick at heart with the hopeless pursuit of the phantom Blight. He was one morning returning leisurely to his lodging, having sent the detective, whom he still kept as his vicergerent, in an opposite direction, and was pondering upon the failure of his mission, and the letter he was about to write to his beloved, which would bear no more cheering import than the former, when his attention was suddenly called to the figure of a man on the opposite path, who had stopped short in his walk, which had been very slow, although his form was athletic in the extreme ; and before Morley (whose kind heart prompted him to hasten and give assistance if required) could reach the spot, the man had fallen to the ground, and was

then struggling and foaming at the mouth in a violent fit. His contortions were fearful to behold, and it was not long before a knot of bystanders collected around him. Fortunately, the thoroughfare was not a very public one, and Morley, ascertaining from a girl in the group where the poor man resided, had him conveyed thither, and medical assistance instantly procured. It was some time ere he could be brought to his senses; and Ernest, who aided in undressing him, for the first time remarked that his clothes were partly those of a sailor.

When reason was restored, the surgeon ordered him to be kept in profound quiet; and therefore, Morley, after relieving the inmates of the dwelling, which was miserably poor, and requesting that, on his account, nothing might be spared for the sufferer's comfort, took his leave, with the assurance of calling on the morrow.

The man raised his eyes with an indescribable expression, as, before making this assurance, Ernest bent over him, saying he

trusted to find him better when he came. It was the first time he had noticed the speaker; and, mingled with the gaze of gratitude, was one of keen inquiry.

For some reason, which Morley hardly dared to define, the letter to Miss Lindsay was not written that day, he thinking it better to postpone writing it till after he had called on the sick man on the morrow.

Not much sleep visited Ernest's eyes that night, and *he* who had disturbed his rest never once closed his. But, alas! that was his guerdon—that “ceaseless wakefulness”—that wearying long unrest!

At noon, the next day, Ernest ascended the little stair, and entered the room of the invalid. The man had arisen and clothed himself, as it appeared, contrary to the doctor's orders; and, in answer to the reproof of his visitor for his disobedience, he said, “I wanted to speak with you, sir, and indeed, it does not signify. I have nothing to live for, and,” he added sadly, “still less to die.”

A shiver convulsed his frame, and Morley, laying his hand kindly on his shoulder, cried, "Oh, do not say that! The same Saviour died for you as for all. Be of good cheer! In the world you will have sorrow and temptation; but 'He has overcome the world!'"

"Not for such as I," answered the man, fixing on Morley's countenance that same look as on the day before; but the gratitude deepened into a warmer glow. It was love now—yes, love shone on those rough bronze weather-beaten features, with the confidence and tenderness of a little child.

"Not for such as you?" repeated Ernest. "He came into the world 'to call sinners to repentance.' 'Though your sins be as scarlet,' through his blood 'they shall be white as wool.' Oh! remember, when all earthly friends forsake you, you have a Friend who 'can bring all things to pass'—the salvation of the vilest sinner! Your Father, and my Father, which is in heaven!"

"He is your Father—and may he bless you for ever, Mr. Morley!" returned the

sailor, whose glance of love was overflowing now.

In unfeigned surprise, Morley regarded the speaker. "Are you then really *Dick Harding*?" he asked. "But, however did you learn *my* name?"

"*Good deeds, Mr. Morley, are registered in heaven, and their essence is not thrown away on earth!* May Heaven repay you, sir, tenfold!"

Ernest's eyes were now moist, and his voice trembled as he replied, "I have only done my duty, and there is no credit due to me; we are all the creatures of circumstance, and, if placed in that in which the voice of conscience calls aloud, we should be accursed did we not obey; but we will talk more of this hereafter. I have now a question to ask of the greatest importance, and I rely on your fidelity in the answer: Where is *Blight*?"

Much to Ernest's consternation, the sailor rose from his chair, and, coming forward close to where he stood, exclaimed, "I surrender willingly, Mr. Morley; I am your prisoner!"

"What on earth do you mean?" cried the latter.

"I mean what I say, sir,—I am your prisoner. I only wonder I have escaped so long! and can hardly be thankful for the delay."

"But talk not of your own crimes now, bad as they may be; tell me, if you know, where Blight is?" asked Morley, with eager gesture.

"Where *Blight* is," echoed the other, solemnly. "His soul is in hell, tormented by legions of devils—none blacker than he! *His bones lie rotting in the cave on Doverton beach!*"

In an instant flashed across Ernest's mind the truth.—He shrank from the man before him in genuine horror, who stood regarding him with calm yet impassioned gaze.—"*You murdered him?*" he asked at length, shuddering.

"I did, Mr. Morley. *He turned my mother out of doors!*"

There was a silence of some moments; and then the sailor spoke again. "Take me,

Mr. Morley, I will go willingly ; for my punishment is more than I can bear—life is a load I can scarce carry.”

“*Pray God to make it lighter, friend,*” said Morley, whose emotion was great. “Never shall mine be the tongue to betray you ! May your days be those of repentance, and *your end peace !*”

“Bless you, Mr. Morley—a dead mother’s blessing light on you and yours !”

And there, in the lone cavern, where his victim sat—the “lady of the beach”—crumbled the torn and mangled body of “Blight,” a prey to the loathsome myriads, and the wild sea-fowl !

On Ernest Morley’s return to England, he had those bones decently interred ; yet, oft in the dim shade of evening, or in morn’s first grey, the fisherman will whisper hoarsely to his mate :—

“That, ’neath the Black Rock, in the pale moonlight,
He has seen stalk the manes of the recreant Blight.”

CHAPTER XII.

“Thou art silent. Hast thou read?”

“I have read, and do admit mine error;
Encased in opinion, I was yet free from bigotry, and open
to conviction.

I do agree that Fiction, used aright, should prove a
mirror

In which, tho’ dimly, our own features we may still
discern.

Drawing from thence, reflection, on things past, present,
and to come.”

“Yes, verily, thou speakest truly; and confession is
the heart’s pure gold!—In our past dream we have
witnessed *Blight* falling equally on the ‘good,’ and those
‘puffed up in their conceits.’ Parching alike deep-rooted
tree and tiny blossom! and it will wither on, till washed
away by dews of Heaven.”

“Then shall the good stand, in immortal bloom,
In the fair gardens of that second birth,
And each bright blossom mingle its perfume
With that of flow’rs which never bloom’d on earth.”

DEEPLY engaged with the open papers and
large account-books before him, sat the

Doctor, in his private room at Sea View. Dusty and dull looked the apartment, and all that it contained—not excepting the occupant himself, who, as time wore on, grew more indefatigable in his one great pursuit, the “accumulation of wealth;” though, for whom so much labour and thought were expended, appeared very doubtful even to his own mind. The great bulk would naturally fall to Aunt Rachel’s share, who, poor soul, would have been far more contented with the anticipation of a third of the golden hoard, and the present enjoyment of a more amicable partner; but she was in happy ignorance of all concerning her husband’s property, and not in blissful remembrance of her own little sum having been swallowed up in one of his hairbrained speculations. She would have passed her time peacefully, notwithstanding her lasting sorrow for the loss of the tender bird taken from her care, had it not been for the increasing irritability and petty tyranny of the Doctor, who, now that the one gentle stay to the ebullition of his “darker part” had been removed, gave free

liberty to speech and action, which the soft appealing glance of his child had never failed to soften and subdue. The harrowing conviction that he had not done his duty towards that child's mother—the doubt concerning all the past regarding her—the strong suspicion that a base deception had been practised for years against him by the man to whose care she had been committed, pressed upon his mind. There they arise—there, with bitter influence; and, above all, against the “better part”—the fear of that which had been effectually hidden for so long, being brought to light—haunted him with jaundiced fear. He would, at times, even doubt the insanity of Blight's poor victim, and dread lest she should even now lay bare before the world the “passages of the past,” and “*ruin his character, which was held so high.*” In these moods he would turn with fresh vigour to his “one great solace,” and ply his pen restlessly, as we see him now.

The sun was shining brightly, but its ray to him was only that of a lamp which cost

him nothing to trim. The drudgery of his life "over that which should come after him," shed no blessing on his own head, nor on that of others. He was only like the pen with which he summed up the amount of his possessions—the wear and tear upon him, from much studying and calculating, being the only effect of his golden employment; perhaps, like that pen, he would be flung aside at last, worn-out and useless, like other refuse.

On one point, and particularly of the present state of things at Sea View, Mrs. Thornton did sometimes venture timidly to remonstrate. Although never the most liberally supplied, still, in former times, Thornton's table had always borne at least a tolerable character, and its fare had passed free from censure, even with the "most bountiful;" but not so now.—It was with pain good, kind-hearted Aunt Rachel observed, with dismay, this fresh proof of the degrading power of the Doctor's polluting idol—that idol which plays with penury, and perverts the judgment of man! But she gave in with this as with all

things else, hoping and trusting on, that time might still "work wonders;" for it was her favourite maxim, "that it is never too late to mend."

Still did the bright sun light up that dingy apartment—still did it fall on the now grey hairs of the Doctor. His pen has ceased at last; he has added up a long pile of figures, and he sits in a profound reverie; presently he adds up all again, and with an impatient "Pshaw! I thought so," declares "he must be getting old and stupid."

Whether his own speech has roused him to the truth that "age is creeping on," we know not, but he leaves his chair in which he has sat till his body aches, and, walking to the glass over the mantel-piece, gives himself a look of scrutiny not unmingled with contempt, and then, with an angry "Bah! I look as young as ever I did," he resumes his seat and his occupation. But it is in vain that he has tried to convince himself that, even in mind alone, "he is not growing old." He cannot hide from himself the discovery

that "it is less vigorous than of yore," and "his intellect far less powerful." He had boasted all his life of that which is beginning to prove traitorous to him now ; he has to search laboriously for what of old presented itself so freely and unasked. And as forcibly these truthful voices made themselves heard within him, he pondered upon the progress of decay, and almost shuddered as he thought of intellect such as *his* "sinking into imbecility."—"Had not the proudest genius deserted those as strong and stronger than he?"—Ah, yes! and from the present his thoughts wandered on through the earth's future of his existence to the end!—*the end!*—the close of this "life's dream," when, "*what would gold avail him then?*"—What would it avail any end?—"But *how should the deeds of 'the past' avail?*"—Long he meditated upon this theme, and his brow relaxed at length, and the air he wore was more placid than it had been for many a day. In about an hour after he might have been seen, to Mrs. Thornton's great astonishment, watering her pet "rose-tree." . . .

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In the large comfortable dining-room at Teevesdale Park sat Rose Lindsay; she was alone, and though a smile of contentment played on her ruby mouth, her bright eyes glistened as though they had been weeping. A serving-man entered the room, saying, "I thought my master was here, Miss."

"Do you want anything of him, Robert? I have begged him to go and lie down."

"The undertaker is here, Miss," said the man in a low voice.

"Oh! do not tell my uncle for the world, Robert," exclaimed Miss Lindsay; "Mr. Morley will arrange everything as soon as he returns; will you say that I expect him back by four o'clock?"

Robert was departing on his errand when he was called back by Rose, who asked sadly, "If the flowers were ready?"

The man, in reply, laid upon the table a few choice sprays. It was the depth of winter, and flowers then are precious things. She held them in her hand a moment, while a tear fell upon the white camellia, and then carried them slowly and thoughtfully up the

broad oaken stair. She paused at a door which was locked, and, taking the key from her bosom, entered with noiseless step the chamber hallowed by the dead. There on the bed lay the General's child, "Ella Clare," laid out in her last robing, and for ever freed from the mournful presages which had marked (and would have still hovered over, had she lingered) her weird pathway here.

Carefully and fondly Rose placed the flowers round the head and on the bosom of her who was "fairer than them all." Then she kissed the marble lips, and stealing from the room, relocked the door, and sat down by the large blazing fire (for it was very cold) in the dining-room again. In a short time she broke suddenly the meditation into which she had fallen, and walked hastily to the window. Could her eyes tell her rightly? Was the lank strange-looking figure who mounted the stone steps of the ample portico her aunt? Yes, surely, it was no less a personage than "Miss Maria Blue."

"Good gracious!" said Rose, in unfeigned surprise, as she opened the door herself to

this important personage, "Why aunt! what has brought you here?"

"What has brought me here, child? Why, what should bring me here?" were Miss Blue's exclamations as she sank into the General's large arm-chair, puffing and blowing as if it was rather the middle of summer than a bleak February morning. She held an immense sable muff and a huge umbrella, and Rose, deeming these articles might oppress her, ventured to relieve her of them.

"Take care, child! that muff was made before you were born, or thought of; you're turning the fur all the wrong way—there's bad luck! Here, give it to me!" and the disturbed lady commenced rolling her favourite round and round, vigorously, as if it were of far more consequence (which no doubt it was to her) than the dead or living.

"I came, Miss Lindsay, because I imagined it only proper for some one of mature age and understanding to be with you and the dear General, at this momentous crisis."

"I thought, aunt," Rose broke in, "that you were offended with my uncle."

"Child," replied Aunt Blue, with majesty, "*inconsistency* is the failing of the human race. I certainly *did* consider, as General Lindsay had done without a child all the years of his long life, he could do very well without one now, at his advanced age."

"Well," quoth Rose, with a smile, and a frown, "he is delivered of his child, now ;" and then, with a sadder air, she added, "Aunt Maria, it is not for us mortals to judge one another."

"No, child, that's true,—give me a glass of wine, will you ?"

While Miss Lindsay accorded with Miss Blue's requirements, the latter, untying her bonnet-strings, commenced puffing again, and fanning herself with her pocket handkerchief, which was always a prelude to "something coming."

"Rose ! you may talk about *judging* one another, and all that, but upon my word you are not fit to judge *here*." She pointed to the windows, with the greatest disdain.

"Not a blind down, and a corpse in the house! Poor dear General! it is time he had some one of mature years to superintend for him."

"It was *her* last request," said Miss Lindsay, coolly, "that the house should be in no way darkened at her death."

"*Her* request? I thought she was mad! What signifies the request of a *mad woman*?"

"She was perfectly rational for twenty-four hours before she died. My dear uncle wanted then to send for Dr. Thornton, but she would not hear of it, but prayed that he might see her before she was put into the earth," answered Rose, who, carried away by the conflict of her feelings, had quite forgotten Miss Blue's utter inability to comprehend her meaning.

"Dr. Thornton! What on earth did she want him to look at her for? I suppose she had heard you talk about him. I say, Rose,—I want you to tell me 'a secret.' You know, my dear, I am a woman of great sense and 'consistency,' and can make a small

allowance for the errors of the human race—although, really, at *his* age!—well—he may yet see his folly. But Rose—she was *not his child*—was she?”

“Aunt,” began Rose, with much *hauteur*, and then breaking into a smile at the absurdity of the behaviour of this ‘paragon of consistency’: “How can you ask such a question. Do you suppose uncle would have so loved anybody else’s?”

“She was very beautiful, wasn’t she?” asked Aunt Maria, not appearing to heed the remark of her niece.

“Will you come with me and see her, now?” said Rose. “You can then judge for yourself.”

“Well, child, I’m not a good hand at the sentimental—it is so ‘inconsistent’ with common sense. Did you say that Doctor Thornton was coming here?”

“Yes, Ernest has gone to fetch him.”

“Oh, my dear love! I will go and take my things off, then; but first, perhaps, I’d better see this poor creature. Dear me! I’m always rather frightened of mad people, even when they’re dead.”

Rose led the way, and Miss Blue followed, with her large muff in one hand, and her umbrella in the other, tramping up the stairs, not unlike an overgrown drummer-boy. Rose again unlocked the door, and led her aunt to the foot of the bed, where she, who was for ever saved the cutting calumny, lay smiling, as if in sleep.

"Doesn't she look beautiful?" asked Miss Lindsay, turning to the 'Blue one.'

"Yes, child, yes: fair, very fair! O dear me, *the inconsistency of man!*"—She had hurried from the scene while speaking, and now stood upon the landing with the first tear in her eye Rose had ever seen there.

There was a slight bustle in the hall below, and the Doctor's voice was heard in subdued tones, as he mounted the stairs with Morley.

"Show me my room, child! I wouldn't be seen in a bachelor's house by this horrid Doctor for all the world. Good gracious quick! Think of the 'inconsistency'!"

Rose pretty well pushed her Blue Aunt into the spacious bed-room opposite—and

experienced a pleasing sensation at the discovery of more goodness and compassion than she had given credit for in that eccentric relative.

Ernest had now gained the landing, followed by Thornton, who, with a troubled countenance, returned Rose's affectionate greeting, and was then ushered to the bedside of her who had loved "too fondly and too well."—Excessive grief, like that of joy, should be held sacred from the human eye, and allotted to that of God alone.

Rose and Morley left the room for a few moments, and he, who had scorned the fount of feeling—derided the crystal stream of Heaven's most holy gift—checking its refreshing flow, and damming up its current, knelt down by the side of her he had so wronged—and we will hope the prayer he offered to the Hearer of it was heard and answered.

"There lies a *blighted* flower," said a deep-toned voice from the door-way, and the General advanced, followed by Rose and Ernest Morley.

“Thornton, you are now acquainted with the particulars of the sad history of which *you are the hero*—this ‘*life dream*,’ this ‘tale of our own times.’—Through her pilgrimage of misery, my child was yet true to you, and she died in the blessed conviction that you had not wantonly forsaken her, and with her last breath she forgave and blessed you.”

“*Let none scorn Fiction who beholds this Fact*,” was Rose’s solemn speech, as she stood gazing on the angelic corpse, “for we may all yet serve ‘to point a moral or adorn a tale.’”

“Quite right,” said the General, in tearful accents, as he laid his hand, now waxing feeble, on the shoulder of his much-loved niece. “Your remark reminds me of a day when I was young ; I went with my father to see an old friend of his, who was drawing near his end. He had been a great actor ; and, while we were there, the clergyman of the town in which he lived paid him a visit. The actor, to his last hour, was humorous, although he had lived and died a good Christian, notwithstanding all that

Aunt Blue would say regarding the impossibility of such a fact. In the course of conversation, the actor asked the clergyman if he knew how it was that he had always commanded so much larger an audience than the latter? The clergyman replied in the negative; and the actor said: 'Then I will tell you—it is *because I have always read Fiction as Truth, and you read Truth as Fiction.*' But enough of this," continued the old man, clasping the hand of the Doctor, whose strong emotion shone in his countenance; "let by-gones pass for ever—shut them out of memory,—let all be friends, and let us love one another."

Rose crept round to Thornton's side and locked her arm in his, and Morley grasped his disengaged hand.

And now, ere we take a long farewell of the group before us, let us gaze into the "shadowy future" with Rose Lindsay's eye of "sunny hope" and "steadfast faith"; let us even steal a glimpse from the magic vision of that little scarlet-hooded gipsy girl, pausing as she nears the Park gate.—She is well.

laden with murmurs of praise upon her lips for kindness from those within. Her sloe-black eyes are raised thoughtfully, and with a lingering expression, to the quaintly-built edifice; they seem now to wander, with the words of her benediction, through the dim vista of years, over the waves of time, to the "hidden pathway" beyond. Thither let us follow on her spirit's track. . . .

"Blessings on the winsome leddie! Blessings on her bright eye and her bonnie brow. Ah! she'll soon 'queen it' here noo; the old man's not for lang!—Ere next Michaelmas-daisy leaves the sod, her loving hand shall lay him low; but before the 'deep toll' shall sound the 'merry peal,' and he shall gie' her to the gude mon, who shall guide her like a star, and shelter her from nipping blasts; and never a bit the less shall she enjoy the sweet because she has quaffed a drop of the withering bitter!—Blessings on all their children (and there shall be many on 'em—I see them, large and small). Blessings on all their race."

Ay, gladly, little gipsy, will we gaze

with thee on the "rose expanded," with its cluster of "young buds" *unblighted*—on "the joyful mother of many children."

And what shall we do with our testy, touchy old Doctor?—Why, as truthful as has been this history, it must be truthful still.

The Doctor is an altered man; he was not too old to see and own his errors. Who is? seeing that we must all become "little children in heart again." He did see them, and he did candidly own them; and he is now happy. No longer is his presence dreaded by the young and "hopeful"; no longer does it cast a chill on those who have yet to taste the draught of the world's "blight"! He can waive his own feelings and opinions, and listen with sympathy and kindness to those of others; he is welcome alike by Christmas hearth and in harvest field; and Rose declares, as she dandles her first son, his god-child, on her knee, that "he is even no longer the NOVEL HATER!"

THE END.

